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BRINGING OUT BARBARA

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BY
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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK : : : : 1917

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Published March, 1917



TO
MARGARET

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BRINGING OUT BARBARA

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THE EXPERIENCES OF A NEW YORK DÉBUTANTE

I

“MOTHER!” I cried.

“How do you do, dear?” a carefully modulated voice replied.

Two minutes earlier we had puffed noisily into the station, and the train had disgorged a car-load of our girls, several of whom, like myself, were leaving school for good. I was staggering under the weight of two huge grips, one in each hand, not having been able to find in my pocketbook any change for a tip to the porter.

Mothers and mothers were pressing eager faces against the railing at the top of the flight of steps we were about to ascend, but I did not discover mine. It was terrible,

that sight of other people's mothers when I couldn't find my own! She hadn't troubled, I thought, to meet her girl, who was coming home to her forever. I jumped to the conclusion that some social engagement had been allowed to interfere with that reunion to which I had been looking forward for months.

In the anguish of that moment I could not remember what she looked like. I knew I had a mother, but her face was without features, like the faces of the people I used to draw when I was a little girl. I could not imagine the faces adequately, so I just left them out.

Laboring up the steps under my load, I saw Jean Royce already at the top, her little slim figure almost obliterated by the clasp of a big man's arms. No father was waiting to sweep me off my feet like that. It was the abomination of desolation, this arrival. I did not know which I felt more

like—a dog without any master or a kitchen-maid going to a new place.

Then suddenly I saw father and mother both, standing quietly beside a pillar. Father looked appallingly tall, had on a silk hat and carried a cane. He's six feet one and always wonderfully dressed, dark, with a clear olive skin, smooth black hair, and a mustache that's too small for him. I should sketch it several inches longer and much thicker on an ideal head. He's continually being mistaken for an Englishman, though he was never in England in his life until he had finished college, and, I think, looks more French than English. At any rate, he doesn't seem a bit like an American, even to me. He was born in New York and has never lived anywhere else; yet when I walked up-town with him once, last Christmas vacation, he observed everything as though he were trying to form an impression of manners and customs previously unknown.

Mother would have served to perfection as a cover design for a fashion magazine. She was faultlessly gowned, creamily spatted, with her hat tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees, and, notwithstanding the breathless humidity of the June day, almost obliterated as to contours of cheek and chin by a large, fluffy white-fox boa. Her whole appearance was calculated to deceive the observer as to her age. It did not seem possible that she could be the mother of a girl of seventeen.

When she made her even rejoinder to my glad cry she protruded her cheek out of the fur just far enough for me to kiss it. As I pressed trembling lips against its coolness I noticed a resemblance between her eyes and those of the dead, stuffed animal that dangled over her shoulder.

Shocked that such a thought had entered my mind, I turned to father with some idea of throwing myself into his arms. Luckily

I perceived in time the absurdity of this impulse. He was inspecting me with his habitual air of detachment. This affectation embarrassed me. He had known perfectly well for seventeen years what I looked like. The dimple in my cheek, the irregularity of my nose, the cleft in my chin—all had been patent in my babyhood; it was unnecessary to observe them further. The changes that counted were inside changes, due to spiritual growth, but to these I well knew he would devote no scrutiny.

“You’ve grown, I think?” he hazarded politely; and I answered, with regret:

“Not much, I’m afraid,” adding: “Oh! I almost forgot. I must go and report to Miss Wier that I’ve been met. I won’t be a minute.”

I found Miss Wier, in whose charge we had made the journey, standing alone, with her hands crossed, a thin, prim presence, spectacled, and as angular as the subject

she taught—geometry. Contrasted with hers, my own lot seemed suddenly full of warmth and color. For her there were neither partings nor meetings. In a spot so suggestive of palpitating emotion as a great terminal the isolation of that patient figure wrung my heart.

I wanted to share with her everything I had—my father, my mother, and my home. My impulse was to take her by the hand, turn a deaf ear to her trifling protests, carry her off bodily. On fire with my desire, I faced about and ran back.

“Mother!” I cried. “May I ask Miss Wier to stay with us while she’s in town? She’s our geometry teacher, you know, who chaperoned us on the train. There’s nobody to meet her and I’m sure she’s going to some boarding-house.”

“Not to-day,” said mother. Then, seeing in my face a very abyss of disappointment, she explained: “There are people for

dinner." And she added, as though making a great concession: "If you want it very much, I might be able to manage it to-morrow."

To-morrow! Bereft of spontaneity, what would the invitation amount to?

"If I can't have her now," I returned hotly, "I won't have her at all."

"You talk like a spoiled child," was the answer. "You don't seem to have outgrown your wilfulness."

At these words memory turned up in my mind old scenes—stormy tears and tempers, frequent foot-stampings, innumerable clinchings of fists—of which I had repented bitterly in my exile, vowing that they should never occur again. Could it have been that they had had any justification in fact? That they had been a child's weapons of defense against false standards of conduct, misinterpretation of motives, and want of heart? But, even if this were so, I was

wrong, now that reason had wakened, in resorting to such means.

"I only meant," I said slowly, "that I didn't think she'd care to move after she was settled. She'd have unpacked her bag, and all that. Is it a formal dinner?"

"No," said mother; "informal. There is no formal entertaining in New York in June."

"Then," I urged, "what would it matter about having one more chair at the table? Couldn't you just slide her in?"

"People are not slid in at dinner," was the reply. "Besides making the number uneven, she would be put in the embarrassing position of having nothing in common with my other guests. It's out of the question. Please go now and report."

I went, genuinely puzzled as to what constituted informality. Offhand I should have defined an informal dinner as one admitting of any amount of elasticity in regard

to arrangement—everybody moving up at the last moment to make room for one more.

“There you are at last, Barbara!” said Miss Wier when she caught sight of me. “All the others are accounted for. Have you been met?”

“Yes, Miss Wier,” I replied glibly, in perfunctory school phraseology, and then stood silent before her, in the grip of sudden realizations.

Of a multitude of small obediences distributed over years, this was the final one. The school had made its ultimate demand of me; imposed its behests upon me for the last time. Henceforth it could dictate to me no more forever. Should I be able to stand alone? Fearful of liberty, fearful of emancipation, I felt unaccountably homesick for the old surroundings with their hitherto irksome props: demerits for transgression of rules, marks for untidinesses,

permissions written and signed. Without these, how was I to know whether I did well or ill?

At the door of my prison I stood hesitant, blinking at the daylight. I was unaware that these thoughts showed in my face, until I saw Miss Wier's eyes soften strangely under her glasses.

"It's hard to give you up. It's harder for us to give you up," she said in a tone I had never heard her use before, "than it is for you to leave us. How we shall miss you, my child!"

Tears started to my eyes. I threw both arms round her neck and squeezed her with all my strength.

"Oh, Miss Wier!" I choked. "After all the bother I've been to you with my rotten work in mathematics!"

She only smiled. At school she got up with her subject, spent the day with it, and took it to bed with her to ponder it in her

dreams. Now she vouchsafed it not even passing attention.

"I hope nothing will spoil you," she said fervently, bending over to kiss me on the lips. "Dear Barbara! Good-by!"

I could give no expression to my grief at having to let our association drop then and there, just as it had sloughed off the relation of teacher and pupil, so hampering to the growth of friendship on equal terms. To breathe a word of what had passed between mother and myself would have been arrant disloyalty; so I gave her one more squeeze, released her abruptly, and dashed away, not once looking back.

When I came up mother saw me wiping my eyes, but she made no comment. The three of us moved along,—together, and yet apart, followed at a respectful distance by a porter carrying my grips. The station was rather crowded, with people standing in little groups, which broke up inevitably to

let father through. What was it, I wondered, that thus cleared a path for him, as though he were a fire-engine or an ambulance? I hated to suspect it of my democratic countrymen, but I gathered that it was the "distinguished foreigner" impression he produced.

All this had little to do with the reunion of a family. It was no reunion—this meeting of three people who had nothing to say to each other except obvious things like "Here is the motor," which mother now said as a little automobile rolled up.

Its wheel was in the hand of a chauffeur unmistakably French, with mustaches as sensitive as the whiskers of a cat, and lynx eyes that indicated an order of intelligence too high for such a simple job as driving a toy machine.

"New chauffeur!" I commented. "Oh, and new groom, too! How terrifying!"

At school the same old darkies were fa-

miliar presences to generations of girls, but mother changed her servants with the seasons, as she did her gowns. An uneasy fear tormented me that she would have changed her daughter, too, had that been practicable. It would have relieved her of the herculean task of making a silken purse out of a sow's ear, when the sow was likely to protest at the amputation. I fancied her discarding me with scant compunction—a last year's daughter; a daughter out of style; one not worth the trouble and expense of remodelling.

“Show me your latest thing in daughters,” I could imagine her saying in her somewhat languid voice. “No; not to take with me. I shall have her made to order. My last daughter I got ready-made, and she was such a complete failure that I had to throw her away.”

Whimsical as was this idea, it made me seem to myself even more of an alien than I should otherwise have done in that deli-

cately upholstered car, my well-worn clothes brushing the luxurious ones on each side as I sat down uncomfortably between my parents upon a seat obviously designed only for two.

I felt as though I were being taken somewhere to be adopted instead of to my own home, and that the first thing they would do when they got me there would be to order me a bath and provide fresh raiment.

The groom adjusted the robe and asked:

"Where to, madam?" touching his cap.

"Home," was the answer.

"Yes, madam," he replied, touching his cap again. "Very good, madam," touching it a third time.

"And—James!"

"Yes, madam," with another touch.

"Tell René not to drive quite so fast as he did on the way down."

"Very good, madam," with still another sign of deference.

I had begun to regard this frequent gesture with fascinated eyes.

"Don't you get tired of being treated like royalty?" I questioned flippantly when the door had snapped. "I should be bored to death by having a man like that about."

"His manners are excellent," returned father, with an emphasis which was clearly meant to reflect on mine; and, indeed, the groom's were the better of the two.

"It's a tiresome trip from school in hot weather," mother remarked presently.

"Yes, mother," was my prompt answer. "Quite, mother."

"Through uninteresting country," she went on.

"Yes, mother," I repeated. "Very, mother."

"Did you make an early start?" father inquired.

"No, father," I replied in monotone. "Not very early, father,"

Conversation languished. At length mother tried again.

"Did you receive a letter from me yesterday," she questioned, "with money in it?"

"Yes, mother," I said. "Thank you, mother."

At this, with one accord, they drew back.

"Have you lost your mind?" father demanded. "Or are you making fun of us?"

I laughed.

"I was only trying an experiment," I explained. "You see, I have such difficulty with my manners, and his kind seemed so simple, I hoped an adaptation of them would work. It won't, though. It seems more difficult for a girl to give satisfaction than for a groom."

"You put things in the strangest way," mother objected. "Why do you talk about giving satisfaction, as though you were a servant? You, the daughter of the house!"

I made no reply. It would have required some thought to formulate my reasons for the remark; and, even had I done so, my success in conveying them would have been problematical. Theoretically I was the daughter of the house, certainly; but practically I was worse off than the groom, who, if his efforts to please did not meet with success would be dismissed, and thus provided with an opportunity to try his luck elsewhere. There was no such loophole for me. Satisfactory or not, now that I was here, here I should have to remain.

How was I to fit into the existence of which the expensive trifles I had already noted were the emblems and the signs? I had no notion of either the duties or the perquisites of my position. Instead of familiarizing me with them gradually during my adolescence—the period of greatest adaptability—mother had abruptly cut me off at its start from my natural surroundings and thrust me into

others where entirely different ideals prevailed.

Having kept me for four years out of sight, put away like an epileptic or a lunatic, she had suddenly brought me back in the expectation that I would feel like a daughter.

I didn't feel like a daughter. I didn't know what I felt like, I'd been away from home so long—ever since I was a kid of thirteen. Now I was almost a woman; too old to go to school any more. Every summer I'd been packed off to camp, and the winter and spring vacations were too temporary to make much impression.

Just then we passed the cathedral and my eyes fell upon a long line of orphans going in to some service.

That was it! That was what I felt like! A blue-garbed Orphan, with a capital O—a Public Charge—an Institution Child! By a quick transition my thoughts passed from

myself to mother. If I had had no mother, she had had no child. During my long exile she had remained in undisturbed possession of a childless house. She had had no wilfulness to encounter; no opposition; no interruptions; no demands; no whispered confessions; no penitence; no confidences in the dark, cheek on cheek.

The motherhood that was the kernel of my soul revolted, and there arose within me a fierce longing for a little child of my own, that I might make up to it all that we had lost—she and I. I felt that I should never be able to give it up to any one, even at night. When I woke I should want to feel its warm, live, marvellous little body in my arms; press it, limp and unresponsive as it was, against my breast. It would grow up then without my knowing it; and I should grow along with it, because I would have to find answers to the questions it asked. That would be much less disconcerting than re-

ceiving it back from somewhere, full-grown, like a Venus rising out of the waves.

Poor mother! I understood a little now why she had not seemed more glad to see me. My absence had become a habit. It wasn't going to be easy, this taking up of motherhood at the eleventh hour. She had omitted all the steps—the settling of childish difficulties, the comforting of small troubles easily comforted. As she sat there beside me, so calm, so dainty, so aloof, she seemed to me to resemble in every respect a woman who had never either desired or possessed a child.

“Where's he going?” I asked suddenly, when the chauffeur failed to slow down at the accustomed corner. “Stop him, mother! He's passed the street.”

“What are you thinking of, Barbara?” she returned. “I wrote you we'd moved into the new house.”

“Oh-h!” I gasped. “The new house? Of

course! I'd forgotten all about it. It went completely out of my head."

"We've been in it two weeks," said father as we slowed down before an imposing edifice, which upon my previous views of it had been obstructed by scaffolding. "That is the only reason we're not at Westbury. Rotten bore! It's practically all furnished."

"All furnished!" I repeated, incredulous. "That immense house—in two weeks? But you had a lot of things, of course."

"Very little that was suitable," he replied.

"My furniture?" I insisted, suspicious and on the defensive. "You haven't got rid of that?"

"You'll see," said mother evasively as we got out.

The front door swung inward, revealing three men, one in afternoon attire and two in livery. All had British countenances, entirely devoid of expression, and all were six feet high. These strange, imposing servants

in possession of a strange, imposing house oppressed my spirit.

"What's become of Jules?" I whispered to mother, referring to our erstwhile French butler, whose wrinkled, smiling face had welcomed me home at least twice—at Christmas and at Easter—and who, therefore, in our ménage, might almost have been regarded as a family servant.

"I couldn't have a Frenchman in this house," she replied.

"But you have one on your car!" I demurred, doubting whether I should ever master these distinctions. It was apparently correct to employ a French chauffeur. A butler, however, must be English. Moreover, an impressive presence was a requirement. Not being very tall myself, I had a fellow-feeling for those who did not measure up to standard, and determined that when I had a house I would employ only short men.

The entrance-hall was spacious, with Caen-

stone walls and a floor of black and white marble laid in squares.

We went up in the elevator to the third landing to inspect my room before lunch.

The walls of this room were panelled in ivory; the furniture was ivory and cane; the hangings pale-rose taffeta; the rug of the same hue. The desk was supplied with a desk set of pale-rose leather, tooled in dull gold, and the crowning touch was a pale-rose quill pen, thrust into a pale-rose receptacle filled with white shot.

I had never seen white shot used for purposes of ammunition, and wondered where this had been obtained.

I did not like this two-toned room; it cried to heaven for some jarring note—something crashingly purple, orange, or blue; yet my heart overflowed in appreciation of the pains mother had bestowed upon it, the time she had spent in carrying out the minutiae of the scheme, just now, when she

was so busy and had so much on her mind. Nothing that day had made me so happy as this, and I threw my arms round her neck, crying:

“Oh, mother darling! How sweet of you!”

Her next words chilled me to the bone.

“I felt sure you’d be pleased with it,” she said. “This whole room was on exhibition, just as it is, in every detail, even to the pictures, at the Dartmour Shops. All they had to do was to move it. Luckily even the curtains were an exact fit.”

She left, telling me to meet her in her sitting-room when I had taken off my things.

While I was standing disconsolate there was a muffled knock at the door. I opened it and found that my grips had arrived in the hands of one of the huge footmen. No sooner had he left than I ripped open the nearest one, scattered its contents over the floor, and rapidly selected what I wanted.

My old felt slippers went under the bed, my memory book on the table, the photographs of our cheer leaders and basket-ball teams I piled on the desk—all but a few of the choicest, which I stuck in the mirror of the dressing-table. Then, a little comforted, I ran down-stairs. In the dining-room the table was laid for two, father having disappeared.

It was a very large dining-room indeed, decorated in green and white marble, with a stone mantel and tapestried chairs.

“The breakfast-room isn’t finished yet,” mother explained. “We’ll always lunch there when it is.”

The butler stood behind mother’s chair, a footman behind mine. Acting in concert they pulled the two chairs out simultaneously. I sat down, my feet missing the floor by half an inch.

The first course was cold eggs in aspic jelly, with a herbaceous border encircling

the dish. I partook nervously, not only of the solids but of the party-colored garnishings.

"Have you got a new cook?" I asked, detecting an unfamiliar bite at the tip of my tongue.

"A chef," she replied, "who was twelve years at Voisin's. He's an expert at seasoning."

The second course roused little interest in me, as the eggs had more than satisfied my appetite. It consisted of small round filets, each with a mushroom on top and, underneath, a layer of artichoke resting upon a foundation of toast. I took one perfunctorily, and also a spoonful of very black, thick sauce. Salad followed; and we had for dessert ice-cream, together with strawberries almost as big as plums. At least that was the way they felt when I swallowed them.

Coffee was served in mother's sitting-room

by the butler, the first footman immediately following him with liqueurs on a tray. We declined both and they marched out again.

"I've ordered the car at three," mother announced.

"Must we go out?" I asked, lolling in an easy chair. "I feel as though I didn't want to move after that lunch."

Her eyes rested upon me in disapproval.

"You must learn not to eat everything," she said. "I don't. If you noticed, all I took to-day was an egg, some green peas, and a strawberry or two."

"What do you have it all cooked for, then?" I questioned. "Isn't it a waste?"

"Oh, no," returned mother vaguely. "François doesn't waste anything. He makes use of it in some way, of course."

"Where are we going at three?" I resumed.

"To get you some clothes," she replied with decision.

I had not been mistaken, then, in my conjecture as to raiment.

"What's the matter with those I've got on?" I demanded, in sudden reluctance to part with the rough garments that had adapted themselves to my casual lines, and the discarding of which would mark the end of an epoch.

"They're unsuitable," she decreed. "They were all very well for a schoolgirl, but you're not a schoolgirl now. Go and put on your hat."

As we crawled down Fifth Avenue, in a line three deep of other motors bent on similar errands, I remarked that we should never get to Rosenberg & Hymen's at this rate.

"We're not going there," mother enlightened me. "I shall not dress you at the department stores any longer. We'll see whether Yvette has anything."

Yvette had a great many things. Her dressmaking establishment, which special-

ized in girl's frocks, was carried on in a large corner house built not five years before as a private residence, and hastily vacated, as such houses often are in New York—why, nobody knew.

Yvette herself failed to appear, but in her absence the gowns were displayed by a Miss Hawkins, who seemed to be a person of authority, and a smiling assistant to whom money was no object.

“This is only a hundred and fifty dollars,” she would say, holding up an exquisite, flower-like dress, thrown together out of nothing more durable than net and tulle. “That blue chiffon with the silver embroidery is two twenty-five; but look at the lines of it!”

These figures made my brain reel. Up to this time, while a girl at school, eighteen fifty had been the highest price paid at Rosenberg's for my “best” dresses. My shirt-waists I had been allowed to choose

myself at Tracy's, for sums ranging from \$1.49 to \$4.75, articles of striped and zig-zagged patterns, in which my soul had rejoiced. At home I had always had my supper apart on a tray, and at school my wardrobe had stood up well beside those of the other girls.

"How do you like the blue, Barbara?" mother asked indifferently. "Don't you think it's rather pretty? I think I shall have my daughter try the blue one on, Miss Hawkins."

I went over to her and whispered tensely in her ear.

"Two hundred and twenty-five dollars for that dress is robbery, mother!" I said. "Don't buy it! Please, don't! Suppose I should get a spot on it! Let's go back to Rosenberg's. They've got lovely things! Really they have, when you get extra lace to fill them in! I'm not out; I don't need such a beautiful dress as that."

"Yes; you do," she returned placidly. "You forget that you're coming down to all my informal dinners after this. Could we have this dress for to-night, Miss Hawkins?"

At Rosenberg's alterations inevitably took ten days; so I was astonished when Miss Hawkins acquiesced suavely:

"If there's not too much to do, madam; certainly I'll hurry it through for you! The alterations, of course, will be extra—I can't tell how much until I see just what there is to be done."

While two efficient young women were pinning and snipping at me together, mother ordered more dresses and arranged for appointments late in the week. As we were leaving the establishment I reminded her that she had forgotten to ask anything more about the cost of the alterations.

"Twenty-five dollars," said Miss Hawkins offhand. "The young lady seems to be very

economical; so different from most of the young ladies nowadays. How nice that is!"

Her tone was bland, but her glance at me was inimical as she bowed us out.

On our way home I maintained silence for at least two blocks. Then I burst out:

"It's wicked to charge twenty-five dollars for those alterations! Why, mother, there was hardly anything to do! Just a little redraping in the back and putting in some tulle—about a dollar's worth, I should think. It could have been done just as well in the house."

"Not in time for to-night," rejoined mother easily. "Why do you worry so, Barbara? You're not paying for it."

We had tea, served by most of the men; and when I went up to my room there was the gayly striped box that held my dress.

I had no desire to open it. The extravagance I had seen displayed that day sickened me. More food than you could eat;

better clothes than you needed to wear; a servant at every door and behind every chair—I was weary of it already, weary and depressed. What was the object of this continual outpouring of money for that which was not bread?

One little pincushion of mother's choosing would have meant more to me than the whole room she had bought with a price, and a single kiss of real welcome I should have prized above all the finery in the world.

"You must learn how to wear your clothes, Barbara," she admonished me as we went down-stairs together at five minutes to eight. "You can't move about in an evening gown as though you were swinging clubs."

I restrained my movements obediently.

As we passed the heavily wainscoted room known as father's "Study," through the open door I glimpsed the butler deigning to occupy

his leisure moments in altering by the fraction of an inch the positions of the magazines on the Italian table.

"You haven't told me yet who's coming," I said in the drawing-room. "How many are there?"

"Ten in all," mother answered. "Mrs. Apthorp-Brown; the Glynn Rollinses, who are motoring in from Westbury; Miss Bolles, a most charming woman; Mr. Emery Winship, an old friend of ours; another man who is staying with him, whose name I forget; and Allan Denning."

From her omission of data concerning them, no less than from a certain slight accentuation of tone upon their names, I inferred that the Alpha and Omega of the evening were Mrs. Apthorp-Brown and Allan Denning. Of Mr. Winship's privilege I was jealous; mother accepted his friend—why had she not accepted mine?

"Tell me about the nameless man," I

demanded. "What's he like? Old or young?"

"I don't remember," she replied. "He does something, I believe."

"Stocks?" I suggested, out of sheer hostility.

"No; not stocks," she returned. "Writing or painting—something of that sort."

"Oh!" I cried, mollified. "I'm so glad it isn't stocks. I don't think I should like stock-brokers. What does Mr. Denning do?"

Mother drew back.

"Nothing!" she hastened to answer, as though she were denying a malicious allegation. "I've put you beside him, Barbara, and I do hope you won't ask impertinent questions or use slang. Let him do the talking. He's a man of the world and can talk to anybody. It's just luck that he happens to be in town. In the season he's almost impossible to get. I wonder where your father is?"

No sooner had she spoken than my father came in.

How faultlessly erect was his bearing, notwithstanding his height, and how aquiline his nose! Somehow I felt responsible for his entertainment; impelled to rise from my chair and engage him in conversation. He seemed so much more guest than host, so much less father than acquaintance.

“Mrs. Aphorp-Brown!” announced the butler at this point, and I saw him licking his lips as he withdrew.

The old woman who entered did not look the part assigned her. I wanted to cover up her poor neck with a little woolly shawl. There was nothing on it but jewels—not even flesh.

“How do you do?” she said, with no question in her voice, when mother presented me.

Perhaps she thought I ought not to be there. At any rate, she did not notice me

further. The Glynn Rollinses came in next; and, mother having left them to me, I attempted conversation with diminished confidence, which they took no steps to restore. On the advent of Miss Bolles, a dried-up spinster with dyed hair and an enamelled neck, whom they greeted effusively, they turned their backs upon me altogether, and I retreated, to stand propped against the panelling, examining my slippers and feeling very small.

“Mr. Winship!” I heard; and then: “Mr. R-m-m——”

Oh, that butler! He had botched the name on purpose. The appellations of those who, according to his standards, were something, he rolled as sweet morsels under his tongue; but with that of him who merely did something he gave himself no concern. Yet it was only the attitude of his employers that was reflected in the cloudy mirror of his mind.

Then and there I resolved that, as I had wished Miss Wier to be welcomed, so henceforth should every man, woman, or child who set foot upon our threshold be welcomed here. Eager to act upon this determination, I noticed that the young man, having been briefly greeted by his hostess, was now standing by himself, perceptibly ill at ease. He was of medium height, lithe of body, alert of glance, and his awkwardness at the moment was due, I felt, not to any lack of poise but to a peculiar sensitiveness to the atmosphere of this gathering.

I crossed the room and went up to him.

"We were delighted that you could come," I said, holding out my hand.

He took it warmly and his every muscle relaxed.

"That's awfully good of you," he responded. "I was afraid my coming was rather an imposition. But it's all right if you say so."

Further standing about ensued. Presently mother rang a bell and I heard her say to the butler:

"We won't wait any longer for Mr. Denning, Parker. Telephone to his rooms and bring the cocktails at once."

Because this guest had not come, everybody save Mrs. Apthorp-Brown, who was duly escorted by father, had to walk in "informally." Mr. Denning had not forgotten, it appeared. He was merely half an hour late and came in entirely unruffled before we had finished our soup.

How graciously mother accepted the apologies of this drawing-room favorite! He was distinctly handsome, with crisp, backward-curling hair, white forehead and regular features, marred only by a slight puffiness under the eyes and an incipient heaviness just above the collar.

"Mr. Denning," said mother, as the butler pulled out the vacant chair on my right,

"this is my little daughter, just back from boarding-school. She's come down to dinner for a great treat, because it's her first evening at home."

Such an introduction would have caused me inexpressible embarrassment an hour ago; but I had taken the initiative once since then and felt capable of doing so again.

"We came near not having anything to eat on your account," I told him.

"How's that?" he asked, smiling and sitting down.

"The Bible says," I explained, "'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.' Mother is willing to give it to eight, but not to seven. Did you forget? Oh, never mind—don't answer."

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Because I was not to ask you impertinent questions," was my reply. "You were to introduce the subjects of conversation.

You're a man of the world and can talk to anybody—even me.”

“Ask me anything you like,” he invited, bending his well-shaped head quite close, “and I'll give you a straight answer.”

“How were the races on Saturday?” broke in Mrs. Glynn Rollins, in her high, strained voice.

“Dull,” he replied laconically, and turned again to me. “I've had one dinner already,” he confided. “This one went clean out of my head. I had to lie out of it, didn't I? Of course you won't give me away.”

Thus, at the outset of our acquaintance, by just being myself, as mother had warned me against doing, I had “hit it off” with this overrated but, I thought, essentially unpretentious young man. And, of course, it was amusing to note the icy regard of Mrs. Glynn Rollins at the shoulder he kept persistently turned in her direction.

“Who's that chap on your left?” he

asked, *sotto voce*, with a full stare at Mr. Winship's protégé. "I don't remember having seen him anywhere before."

"Is that any reason for looking at him as though he were some strange species of animal?" I demanded. "What are dinners for, if not to meet new people? I should think just seeing the old ones over and over would be an awful bore."

He smiled, refusing to take up my challenge. His complacence rather nettled me.

"You haven't answered my question," he said.

"I don't know yet who he is," I replied. "All I know is that Mr. Winship brought him, and that he does something. When he's finished talking with Miss Bolles I'm going to ask him what. I don't think it'll be long; he doesn't seem to be getting on particularly well."

My neighbor was, in fact, playing with his bread between pauses of unconscionable

length, crumbling it up shockingly with the most nervous, delicate hand I had ever seen.

"What do you do?" I finally came to his rescue by asking.

"Paint," he replied, turning upon me that alert glance. "What do you?"

"What do I look like a girl that could do?" I retorted.

"That's a wonderful sentence!" he laughed. "Let's translate it into English."

The play of expression on his face as he talked was astounding. In three minutes it had passed from seriousness to inquiry, and now it was all broken up into fun.

"What," I complied, "does a girl who looks as I do look as though she could do?"

He paused, and I felt myself flushing under a scrutiny that was yet in no sense a stare.

"Anything," he affirmed quietly. "Everything."

"I'd like to paint," I was moved to confess.

"Have you studied drawing?" he asked.

"We had it," I replied connotatively.

"That's a different matter," he smiled.

I smiled back. He looked altogether boyish when he smiled.

"I've finished now," I enlightened him.

"Finished what?" he cried. "Not drawing!"

"No," I returned. "School."

"What next?" he continued.

"Oh, next? The world, the flesh, and the devil. But I'm not ready for those yet. It's going to take a year to break me in."

"By what means?" he demanded.

I hesitated. Following my eyes he noticed their stare at the platter which was at that moment being brought in. Upon it was offered salmon, counterfeiting lobster—pop-eyes, feelers, and all.

"See that wolf in sheep's clothing?" I

said, nodding toward the triumph of culinary skill. "That's what they intend to do with me."

"What an outrage!" he said in a voice that was capable of as many gradations of expression as his face. It deepened by several tones as he added: "Don't let them! Please don't!"

"That's curious," I returned gravely. "Yours is the second warning I've had today. The first was from another friend of mine—my teacher, Miss Wier. 'I hope nothing will spoil you,' she said. I didn't understand what she meant, but I think I'm beginning to——"

As I spoke my gaze swept the table, and his followed mine as he said, very low:

"I'm glad you include me among your friends."

Allan Denning was doing better now by Mrs. Glynn Rollins, having several times emptied his glass of champagne. She was

saying something to him behind her fan and I heard him laugh rather coarsely.

Father was absorbed in endeavoring to hold Mrs. Apthorp-Brown's attention long enough to admit of his recounting to her an anecdote. The wandering of her eye failed to discourage him in this attempt. He talked more to her in five minutes than he had talked to me in five years.

Worried at her failure to swing the conversation from right to left at the exact moment of the entry of the roast, mother observed in dismay that Miss Bolles on one side and Mr. Glynn Rollins on the other were left without any one to talk to; her relief was evident when they leaned forward across the table and began to talk to each other. Miss Bolles chattered like a magpie, now that she had reverted to some one who spoke her language, her talk consisting mostly of references to "Kittie," "Birdie," "Larry," "Dick," and other familiars.

With the exception of Allan Denning, nobody drank anything to speak of; yet corks popped one after another behind the pantry screen until I had counted six small explosions. As the butler passed me the salad he blew down my neck, and my fastidious nostrils detected an odor that betrayed the whereabouts of some of the champagne.

The night was stifling. In spite of the size of the room it smelt sickeningly of rich, heavy food. After a varied and exciting day I grew suddenly dizzy; and for several seconds the buzz of strident talk and shrill laughter sounded alternately far off and ear-splittingly near. The faintness passed, leaving me with a frown between my brows and a splitting headache. I felt that I could not endure another moment of this confusion of sound.

The hubbub amid which we ate at school had never bothered me. It was as spontaneous as the twittering of birds in an aviary.

This was of a different quality—noise without gayety; laughter without mirth; mechanical, self-conscious, and forced. When at last we got up, the only thing that kept me from making my escape to bed was the prospect of seeing my new friend for a few moments more at the end of the evening.

The men stayed out a long time. In their absence mother “took on” Mrs. Apthorp-Brown, who, I had observed, neither listened to what was said to her nor said anything herself. Miss Bolles and Mrs. Glynn Rollins went off together to sit on a sofa in a remote corner, where they conversed, over cigarettes, in tones inaudible to the rest. Even their smoking they did not seem to be able to do without making anything of it, but poised their elbows in graceful attitudes and puffed out the smoke ostentatiously through pouting lips.

The only book in the drawing-room was an unwieldy one, with a parchment cover,

marked "Roma"; so I settled myself in a fairly comfortable bergère with that, and was soon absorbed in the photographs of art treasures it contained. They roused my yearning to travel, to learn, to absorb.

"Yes," I heard mother saying as I turned over a page; "it came near being a bad accident. His horse refused, and he went off, striking the back of his head. Luckily he was only stunned."

I returned to my photographs, puzzled. Couldn't they—who had travelled and had countless other opportunities—find anything better to talk about than the spill of an acquaintance during a game of polo, the merest incident, a thing of no consequence to anybody? When I heard the men approaching to rejoin us my heart thumped agreeably.

To my disappointment it was Allan Denning who sought me out. He was very nice and said a good deal about seeing me

at Newport, but I could not forgive him for not being somebody else. That somebody else was valiantly talking to mother; out of the corners of my eyes I could see how embarrassed he was.

Presently Mrs. Apthorp-Brown arose majestically; there was no clock in the room, but she apparently knew by instinct that it was half past ten.

At the door we found each other again—I and my new-made friend—and stood without speaking for several seconds, he looking down, I looking up; my hand in his.

“Won’t you come to my studio,” he asked eagerly then, “and see some of my work? I’m just moving—that’s why Mr. Winship’s taken me in.”

“I’d love to!” I replied with enthusiasm.

“When will you come?” he went on.

“I’ll come on Thursday,” I specified, “at three. We’re going away next week.”

“Bully!” he cried, and gave the address.

"You've forgotten one thing," I reminded him.

"What's that?" he asked.

"To tell me your name," I smiled. "It might be convenient for me to know it."

He laughed.

"Randall," he said; "John Randall. Don't forget. Thursday, at three! Good night."

"Oh, mother!" I cried, when everybody had gone. "Isn't he wonderful?"

She regarded me curiously; and I detected an increase of consideration in her manner when she said:

"You got on with him surprisingly well."

"Any one could get on with him," I replied.

"Most people do," she assented. "He knows everybody and goes everywhere. He's at every performance of the opera, every dance, every musicale. He's engaged months ahead for week-ends. Still, I hope to get

him to spend a Sunday with us at Westbury in September."

During the foregoing my eyes had widened in dismay.

"Mother," I said solemnly when she paused, "I hate to tell you, but we're not talking about the same man."

Instantly she stiffened.

"To whom did you refer?" she asked coldly.

"To Mr. Randall," I replied, wondering. "I'm going to his studio on Thursday."

"Girls of seventeen don't go to artists' studios," she said in an icy tone. "You're a child and can't be expected to understand such things; but that he should ask it proves conclusively that he's not a gentleman. He was taking advantage of your inexperience—that's all. I shall never ask him inside this house again."

I felt myself turning still and white.

"He didn't know you'd feel that way

about it," I said slowly, "any more than I did. Perhaps he isn't a gentleman—in your sense. But I don't care, because I'm not a lady. Good night!"

Half an hour later I was lying in my bed in the dark, limbs still rigid, eyes staring at nothingness. Little by little I relaxed—first my fists, then my legs and arms, then my eyelids; finally I was all a little limp heap, and then I began to sob as though my heart would break.

Nothing mattered if only your mother was real. What was the use of living if she wasn't? What joy would there be in loving if you couldn't confess your love with your face hidden on her breast? Oh, how I had cried for my mother during sleepless hours, night after night, year after year, at school! In the morning my pillow had been all soaked with tears and I had put it on the window-sill to dry, so that no one might see.

From the day of my birth to this day I

had had a succession of mothers, but no mother! The trained nurse had been the first to mother me; then, oh, happy years! had come my Irish Jane, with all the motherhood of all the ages reflected in the blue pools of her eyes, and all the tenderness of the Mother of God in her awkward red hands. Then, because poor Jane had only the halting vehicle of her own brogue in which to give broken expression to the wealth of her soul, foreign governesses had succeeded; and finally, their variety of motherhood not being entirely adapted to the requirements of the situation—imagine Uncle Remus rendered with French or German accent!—had ensued the varied angularities of the patient, reserved, devoted mothers at school.

It was too much to expect of these unworldly women, spinster school-teachers from small towns, to turn me out a finished product, fitted to shine in metropolitan draw-

ing-rooms! No one could have made a society woman of me but mother herself. Was it my fault that I had come back to her with ideals opposed to hers—that our standards were as wide apart as the poles?

Only love could have wrought the miracle—bridged the chasm. Did my mother love me? It was a terrible question to arise in a young heart.

Oh, how I wanted her love! It was my natural right! I must have it, for I was bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh!

Far away, in a room as safe from intrusion as a fortress, she little guessed into what depths of anguished longing my resentment was breaking up. The starvation of the starved years was as nothing to the starvation of to-night.

My mother was in the same house with me—and yet I was alone!

II

UPON the following morning I woke with a quivering sigh and that lassitude of spirit which follows keen emotion. Not only did I feel that mother and I should never understand each other, but I didn't care much whether I ever saw John Randall again or not.

When the maid tapped at the door with a summons to go at once to mother's room, I knew what that summons portended. The subject of our disagreement of the evening before was to be reopened and the pros and cons of the discussion rehashed.

I found mother, semidressed, in the setting appropriate to such mid-morning attire—her boudoir. But under the shimmering folds of her negligee her whole figure was taut with determination.

"Barbara," she began, "have you notified that young man who was here last night that he's not to expect you at his studio on Thursday?"

"No," I said; "I haven't done anything about it. Why should you call him 'that young man,' mother—as though you didn't know him?"

"Because I don't intend to know him," she returned, "except in the most general way. He's forfeited his right to anything more by presuming to invite you, a mere child, to come to his studio—a thing that's unheard of! The effrontery of it! No sooner had he managed to get himself asked to my house than he seized his opportunity, through an introduction to you, to try and break into society."

"Now, mother!" I smiled. "As though *I* could help any one socially! Why, you yourself say I don't know how to stand, or walk, or behave, or wear my clothes!"

"Nevertheless," she replied, "you are my daughter."

So might the Czar of Russia have spoken in referring to the czarevitch. It was difficult for me to get her point of view as I watched her sitting there, so attractive, her glossy hair full of high lights, her rounded arm, delicately tapering at the wrist, lying along the arm of the chair. She would have died rather than say, "I am a pretty woman"; yet she had not the smallest hesitation in declaring: "I am It!" Hers was an arrogance not of person but of place.

"Have you thought," I suggested, "that maybe he doesn't want to get in? Perhaps he wouldn't care about it. He's pretty busy painting, you know."

"That's utterly absurd," she retorted. "Of course he wants it! Everybody does who hasn't got it, in every country of the world. What do you suppose the *nouveaux riches* in America give lavish entertainments

for if not for that? If they're impossible themselves they try to buy social position for their sons and daughters, to whom they've been able to give the advantages they have missed."

"You don't have to do a thing," I commented. "I should think you'd be glad."

"That's where you're wrong. I have a great deal to do. I've got to keep going. People are so easily lost sight of in this country, where everything is in a continual state of flux. Take the Blaisdens, for example. You remember the Blaisdens?"

"I've heard of them. Didn't they give a series of musicales about two years ago?"

"Wonderful musicales!" she replied. "Caruso sang at the last one."

She paused, and I remarked:

"It seems to me I haven't heard the Blaisdens mentioned lately."

"They're never mentioned," she replied. "They've dropped out. They went abroad

at the end of the season and haven't been heard of since. The Glynn Rollinses took their house. They considered themselves lucky to get it, as it's an ideal house for entertaining. Everybody goes there, just the same."

"Poor Blaisdens!" I sighed. "Perhaps they had to pay Caruso out of the rent! Doesn't any one care enough about them to ask?"

"People haven't time. There are always things to go to. It doesn't take a generation to be forgotten; it's a matter of months."

"If it's as impersonal as that, why bother?" I questioned. "Any unforeseen circumstance, such as the death of an aunt or an illness, would break up the whole scheme. I'd much rather have a few friends whom I could count on to come and see me if I were ill, or call me up on the telephone, whether I happened to be in mourning or not. Then there'd never be any break to

bridge over—no worry about trying to get back. One would have a freer mind for other things.”

“What things?” she asked impatiently.

“Oh, I don’t know,” I evaded, flushing in sudden reserve; then, deciding that this was unfair to her, I brought myself to add: “Reading, studying, thinking things out. In my case painting, perhaps.”

“Painting!” She took me up. “There you are! I don’t believe you ever thought of such a thing as painting until you met that man last night.”

“Yes, I did,” I assured her eagerly. “Oh, I love it so, mother! I’ve been painting—a little—for years. Oils and water-color, both. And I did lots of caricatures at school; cut them out of black paper. The girls thought they were killing. I’ve got one of a fat lady up-stairs. Shall I get it?”

“Another time,” she put me off, dismissing my poor little achievements as unworthy

of notice and thus wounding me to the quick.

Never, I believed, to my dying day, would it be possible to me to open my lips to her upon this subject again.

"You won't have much time for reading and studying, and such things, after this," she went on, in a manner distinctly disparaging to all intellectual pursuits. "You'll have enough to do to get ready to 'come out.' I begin to realize that I ought not to have kept you away so long; but, now it's done, we must make the best of it. A great deal can be accomplished in seven months if you make a business of it."

"Is it so serious as all that?" I asked, intimidated. "Can't I just go to parties, when the time comes, for the fun of it?"

"Don't refer to cosmopolitan entertainments as parties," she corrected. "You'd find the dances extremely formidable if you hadn't laid a foundation with the dancing men."

I wondered whether the dancing men had any other avocation, or whether the whole of their activities was comprehended in that term, as one speaks of "performing bears."

"Is Allan Denning a dancing man?" I asked.

"Yes," she returned, with an increase of cordiality in her tone, "and you made an excellent beginning with him last night. That was one reason I was so determined not to have you get mixed up in any way with this painter and his friends, whoever they are. The most exclusive women of my acquaintance are only too glad to get Allan Denning to come to their houses. Do you imagine for one moment that he's going to stoop to enter into competition with a nobody for the favor of a mere schoolgirl? Don't deceive yourself! If he sees you going about with outsiders he'll let you drop; and your stock will fall—not only with him but with all the other young men of his sort

who might have proved extremely useful to you."

As she spoke I recalled Allan Denning's cool stare at John Randall last evening, his whispered "Who is that? I don't remember having seen him before," which had dispelled my first pleasant impression of him and stamped him for me as a snob.

"Mother," I said, with intense earnestness, "suppose I don't want the sort of success you've planned for me? Suppose the very thought of it is repugnant to me? Suppose I don't care for men of Allan Denning's type and do care for those of Mr. Randall's? Since it's a matter of choice, oughtn't it to be left to me to choose? I'm not fitted by temperament for the sort of life you lead. No matter how hard I try, I know I shall not succeed in being a credit to you. Why not drop the whole perplexing business and let me go to college? Think of the relief to us both! What harm does

it do to change one's plans? If I went back to school next year I could pass the Bryn Mawr exams in June. Let me, mother! It would make me absolutely happy. . . . After all, it's my life that's in question, isn't it?"

"Yours!" she cried in high indignation. "You think only of yourself. What about my life? Hasn't my every thought been centred on your coming out—for years? Didn't I build a house that was bigger than I needed just to be able to do the thing properly? And now you say you don't want it! It's perfectly ridiculous! How can a girl of seventeen, who's had no experience, know what she wants? Do you imagine I'm going to allow you, in your childish ignorance and conceit, to knock down at one blow what I've been building up ever since you were born? To rob my social career of its climax?"

I saw that my case was hopeless. Mother

needed me in her business. There was nothing for it but to give in. How could I continue to oppose her and live under the same roof? If I did, existence would be hell! I was the under dog, and I knew it. On the side of the oppressor there was power.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked, with heavy heart. "Write Mr. Randall a note?"

"Yes, dear," she replied, with an entire change of tone and manner. "Sit down at that desk. I'll word it for you."

"Dear Mr. Randall," she wrote through my agency; "I am sorry not to be able to come to your studio on Thursday, as we are moving to the country to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" I repeated, incredulous. "I thought we weren't going until next week."

"I've changed my mind."

"On my account?" I asked with a slow flush. "Do you think I'd go to the studio

on the sly, mother? Is that the sort of girl you think I am?"

"It's not that," she replied hastily. "I'm doing it in order to supply you with an excuse."

I chewed my pen and waited for her to go on with the dictation.

"With appreciation of your kindness in asking me," she concluded, "Sincerely yours, Barbara West."

When I had sealed the envelope she pressed the bell for her maid.

"Yvonne," she directed, "see that this is sent at once by messenger. No answer."

Thus definitely the episode was closed. All that day I expected signs of dismantling, but did not see any.

"How can we move on Thursday?" I asked at dinner. "Why, this house is going full tilt! Not a single thing's covered up or put away. And how is the other house to be got ready five days before the time?"

"My dear child," mother explained with a slight smile, "it's perfectly simple. The Long Island house is never really closed. It's easily put in shape with an extra staff of cleaners. I telephoned the superintendent this morning to attend to it. As for the town house, I never have anything touched until I'm out of it. We take our final meal with the silver on the table. It's the only way to live nicely."

At this calm statement my mind went back to a house I knew in the Southern city near my school. I had been privileged to enjoy its hospitality on several occasions through a classmate, whose home it was. How did its mistress live, if not nicely? Many a rare bit of old china had arrested even my inexperienced eye, when passed to me in her own hand at tea-time. The furniture in her cool parlor, the lace at her wrist, were as fragile and exquisite as herself. Yet that house was "put away," regularly

at the first sign of warm weather, every spring. The entire staff at this gentle lady's command consisted of two old fat mam-mies.

For the first time it flashed upon me that she must be in straightened circumstances. I had never suspected it amid the several daintinesses with which she was surrounded—all cherished heirlooms. She would have considered it lacking in taste to display her poverty. What would she have thought of our display of riches? Even our lavishness of housecleaning suddenly seemed to me indecently ostentatious. And why suppress every sign of the business of living? It would have been inspiriting to hear the whir of the machinery, instead of silencing the parts with a surfeit of oil.

"Father," I asked, "do all the people you and mother know live in big houses?"

"Oh, no," he answered, and I felt immensely relieved until he added, smoothing

his little black mustache: "Many of them prefer apartments now. The Abercrombies have a whole floor of that new apartment-house on Fifth Avenue. It has twenty-six rooms and eight baths. I met Abercrombie at the Racket Club yesterday, and he said they found it very comfortable."

During the whole of the next morning I was aware, in my room, of the faint rustle of tissue-paper in the hall. When I emerged the maid's arms were buried in it up to the elbows, while her nose pointed toward the cavernous depths of one of a double row of trunks. This was the sole indication of our impending departure.

We lunched as usual at half-past one. An hour later, according to schedule, we got into the automobile, crossed the Queensborough Bridge, and, at the discreet pace that was all the tiny car was capable of, approached our destination by an uninspiring and filthy route. It did not even remotely

suggest the country, this flat and sordid stretch; all that could be said for it was that it was not the city. On an average of once every two minutes a big touring-car would shoot by us and we would be obliged to eat its dust, which puffed in at our one open window. We had barely composed ourselves after an interval of gasping, gagging, and swallowing before another would come hurtling along.

Mother submitted to this discomfort entirely undisturbed. It was customary not only to live on Long Island until July but to arrive there by this means of transportation. Heat, dirt, and ugliness, since they were part of the scheme, were all to be endured with equanimity.

After the lapse of an hour the scenery—if scenery it could be called, punctuated every few miles, as it was, with mean little villages, road houses, and saloons—improved somewhat, and the air grew less dense.

Presently we began to pass enclosures marked off by tall iron railings, and through wrought-iron gateways we glimpsed blue macadam driveways, edged by trees and greenery, leading to those considerable mansions which, like those who had built them, were so fortunately situated as to be able to turn their backs upon all that was unlovely in their surroundings.

Ours was one of the largest of these. When we reached its boundaries I watched its sombre palings ominously approaching, one by one, and, without pause, flitting by, with a feeling as little cheerful as though I had been a corpse at my own funeral. Once we had turned in at the gate and the iron-work had been left behind, the resemblance to a cemetery was diminished, though the clipped shrubbery and the swept driveway kept it from being wholly dissipated. However the pebbles might fly and crunch under our tires I knew that within the next five

minutes all traces of our arrival would be raked away.

What was the object of moving from one house to another if such moving was to afford no variety, no change of scene? We had descended stone steps in New York; we were ascending stone steps in Westbury. The servants who stood immovably waiting were duplicates of those who had served us at luncheon—the same patent-leather pumps; the same white stockings, shapely calves, knee breeches, braid, faces of painstakingly acquired vacuity. How dull it was to be rich if you were also unimaginative! Duller even than being poor!

Instead of going up-stairs I wandered into the drawing-room and stepped out through the window onto the upper terrace. The garden occupied the lower one. My eye swept it unemotionally. Think of a garden that fails to thrill the being in June! It is unworthy the name of garden, being merely

a space allotted to horticulture. The garden at school—ah, that was a garden, indeed, with a very riot of flowers, growing in Southern profusion—anywhere—anyhow! In this garden they were set out, row by row, with mathematical precision, the varieties differentiated by means of wooden labels, upon which their botanical names were written in ink. To call a rose by its nickname would have been undue familiarity.

After an interval I caught sight of mother on the lower level, moving about among the beds. I had seen her last in dark blue and now she was daintily dressed in mauve. A gardener had sprung up from somewhere. Him she appeared to be directing in some way, vaguely pointing with a folded mauve parasol.

“How did you get out without my seeing you?” I cried, running down to her. “And how did you happen to change? Have the trunks come already?”

"I came out through the billiard-room," she answered. "Of course, the trunks have come! They arrived by motor-truck three-quarters of an hour ago. Yvonne has unpacked half of them by now, with two housemaids to help her. Hurry and change your gown. I'm expecting several people for tea."

As I obeyed I wondered whether Yvonne had arrived by motor-truck, too, sitting beside the driver. At any rate, she had been transferred by some speedier method of locomotion than ours. While I was dressing, motors began to arrive, and when I came down the great hall was already swarming with guests, mostly dowagers in resplendent embroidery, lace veils, and pearls.

I was introduced to a great many of them, who talked rather about me than to me, making such comments as:

"Came home only day before yesterday! How glad you must be to have her!"

"Not very tall for seventeen, is she?"

"She must meet my girls. Could she dine with them next Monday? Oh, no—no one will be there who is 'out.' Just the younger set."

They stayed until nearly seven. When the last group had gone mother announced hurriedly:

"I must fly! We'll be late at the Rudford Joneses, as it is. They're at Oyster Bay and it takes half an hour to get there."

"I didn't know you were dining out," I replied, rather disconsolately.

"We always dine out when we don't have people in," she said. "I've ordered your dinner served in my sitting-room, Barbara."

"Let me have milk toast on a tray instead," I begged. "Then I won't have to have a man watching every mouthful I eat. Besides," I added cannily, "it'll be much better for my digestion. I've been stuffing

myself for two hours with all kinds of little cakes."

"You're as greedy as you can be!" returned mother, shocked. "Well, do as you like."

"It wasn't greed," I explained as she started up-stairs. "It was just something to do. I couldn't stand there unoccupied while all those women looked me over to see whether I would do for their children to associate with."

I woke next morning, in accordance with long-established habit, promptly at half past six—too early to get up. It was, in fact, too early to wake up, for our household habitually remained wrapped in slumber until nine. Yet I was ravenously hungry.

"What would they do," I wondered, "if I should come down at half past seven and demand breakfast? I think I'll try it. They'll be sweeping or something," I conjectured as I went down-stairs.

But "they" were not sweeping. There

was no one about. "They" were imitating the matutinal habits of their employers.

"The butler's probably having his breakfast served in bed," I thought scornfully. I had no use for that butler. "Wonder what'll happen if I ring this bell!"

I pressed it, and for a long time nothing happened. Finally a footman in shirt-sleeves, peering round the screen that hid the pantry door, withdrew his head with a jerk. The next moment he reappeared with his coat on, arms at his sides militarily, and I made my wishes known. He vanished and, after at least twenty minutes, came back with very bad coffee, which I was sure had been designed for consumption below stairs, an over-fried egg, and some cold damp toast, left over from the day before. No trace of the chef's hand here!

When I went back to my room it was just as I had left it—my things scattered here, there, and everywhere; bed-clothes rumpled

on the bed. No doubt the housemaid was still dreaming. This, too, I suppose, was a part of what mother called living nicely.

I pottered about for an hour or two; and then, all at once, the house burst into activity. People walked, creaked, and thumped overhead and under; carpet-sweepers groaned; brooms swished; trays clattered.

At eleven mother came to my room, hatted and veiled, with a little bag in her hand.

"Get ready, Barbara," she instructed me. "The motor will be here in ten minutes."

"Are we going for a drive?" I asked eagerly. "How nice! I'm crazy to get some wild flowers."

"We're going to town," she returned. "I've got some shopping to do. We'll stop at Yvette's and pick up your blue *crêpe de Chine* gown, with the jacket. That ought to be ready to-day. And I think I can find you a hat at Rothenstein's."

"Can't I wear my old clothes," I ques-

tioned, "just to go shopping? We shan't see a soul."

"We'll see everybody," she returned, "at luncheon at Sherry's."

"What a pretty dress!" I said an hour later, with a gratified glance at myself in the long mirror at Yvette's. "This hat does look funny with it."

"It certainly does," agreed mother. "We'll go right to Rothenstein's now."

At the millinery shop the shades were drawn to keep out the heat, and quantities of gray-garbed girls lounged about, yawning. Most of them had yellow hair and very red cheeks.

Mother selected a dainty hat of silver lace, trimmed with tiny flowers and a narrow silk bow. It looked like a boudoir cap and the price was forty dollars. I knew better now than to utter any protest aloud, and even my inner objections were lost in admiration of the skilfully wrought flowerets. The hat

certainly did offset the shape of my head. Made it look trim and compact, I decided, turning it left and right as I held up a hand-glass for its better inspection.

Coming out we met Miss Wier face to face; and I realized, to my dismay, that I was strutting like a peacock.

"Mother," I said, my face burning under my coquettish hat, "this is Miss Wier. I've been dying to have you meet her."

"How do you do, Miss Wier?" said mother graciously. "I've heard so much of you from Barbara. I wish you could come down to the country and spend a night with us—sometime."

"Thank you so much, Mrs. West," was the reply, "but I'm leaving the city to-day. I'm delighted to have this glimpse of you, Barbara. I should hardly have known you, you look so—smart."

There was renunciation in her eyes. Before I knew it she was gone.

I hated my new finery now. I wanted to tear it all off and throw it into the street, since it had come between me and my friend. I longed to convince her that it had wrought no change in me; that it never would. But presently a doubt arose in my breast. Hadn't it begun to affect me—just a little bit?

Sighing and perplexed I sat very still in my corner and watched the summer pedestrians moving along slowly under the gayly striped awnings of the shops, until we turned into Forty-fourth Street, which purred with motors, each pausing for a moment to drop its quota of women in gala attire at the restaurant door and then passing on. Arrayed in cutaway, "dickey," and top-hat, with a cane in one hand and a pair of castor gloves in the other, an occasional male was to be glimpsed amid this female galaxy.

Such get-ups—or should I say gets-up?—I had heretofore supposed had no existence

outside the imagination of whoever wrote "What the Man Will Wear" in the theatre programmes.

One ape, with face merely vapid, bowed to mother; another, with something in his expression that made me shrink, lifted his hat as we passed; then an old one, who was not entitled to the privilege, since he did not greet her, looked me up and down with an odious leer that made me crawl.

But once inside the portals I began to enjoy myself, as I always enjoyed music, bustle, heat, hurry, and noise when I was allowed to be an observer instead of having to take part in the show.

"Isn't this a spree?" I whispered. "I'm so afraid you won't be able to get a table, mother."

"The table was reserved yesterday," she said, "by telephone. There's the head waiter now."

The person designated, after having greeted

her with the smiling cordiality that was evidently appropriate in a head waiter but would have caused a house servant to be discharged, ushered us to a tiny table for two just inside an open window, and darted off to other preoccupations.

"What will you have, Barbara?" asked mother, studying the menu.

"Nothing much," I answered. "It's so hot, isn't it? You order it. There's Mrs. Aspinwall over there, with the stiff woman in yellow, and that horrid-looking girl—if she is a girl! Is she a girl, mother?"

Mother followed the direction of my eyes.

"Look how she's made up, mother," I went on, horrified. "Like a chorus girl! Her lips look as though they were bleeding! I've never seen anything so disgusting!"

At this moment the object of our inspection opened her little silk bag, selected therefrom a minute mirror, deliberately ex-

amined her features therein, gave a few critical touches to her hair, put the mirror back, closed the bag, picked up a fork, and began to prod the food about indifferently on her plate.

"That's Ruth Alvord," mother explained. "You mustn't form slapdash judgments, Barbara. Ruth is a very intelligent girl. Her mother is Mrs. Barton Winslow, a friend of mine. You'll get into trouble if you're not more careful of what you say about people."

"What would you do," I asked curiously, "if I should begin to powder and rouge? to say nothing of behaving like that in a public restaurant!"

"You couldn't," was the reply. "You're not 'out.' She is. It would be very bad form in a girl who wasn't out. Ruth has been out two years. Of course, she does make herself rather conspicuous; but she's all right at heart."

By which she meant not what she said, but that Miss Alvord was the daughter of Mrs. Barton Winslow and must be accepted, without question, as such.

At this moment the waiter who had taken our order came hurrying up.

"What are those little black things?" I asked suspiciously, watching mother, who, having laid a square of dry toast upon her plate, was now spreading it sparsely with something extracted from a dish surrounded with ice and garnished with small slivers of lemon. "Do I have to take any?"

"Sh!" she reprimanded, looking at me as one might look at some uninitiated relative from the country. "It's caviar—fresh caviar. Don't be childish, Barbara! Certainly; take some."

"It's rather good," I admitted; then, the waiter having once more left us, I asked, half banteringly, half affectionately: "Are you ashamed of my ignorance, mother?"

"Not of your ignorance," she replied, "but of your complete unconsciousness that you are ignorant."

Glancing across the vista of tables just then I caught the eye of the Alvord girl. Seeing herself observed, even by another girl, she instantly drooped her shoulders, thrust her chin out in an attitude of studied boredom, flicked a speck from her gown with one long white finger, and let her mouth fall into disdainful curves.

"She's not unconscious of anything she does," I reflected. "I wonder if that's the manner mother'd like me to acquire?"

Our luncheon over, mother barely glanced at the slip that was offered her, folded. Opening her gold purse, she took out a bill and laid it beside the bit of paper on the salver. As it was swept away in the waiter's hand I saw the double X in the corner. I expected mountains of change, but when it came there were only three quarters and

a two-dollar bill. Mother picked up the quarters and waved away the bill.

The waiter who pocketed it had a haggard face, seamed with illness or former want. My meeting with Miss Wier had started me thinking, and now this face suddenly loomed terrible to my eyes, typifying all the miseries of the poor. I dared not look at the man as I followed mother out. Somehow I felt that we had insulted him with our money—made him an accessory in our crime.

As mother threaded her way among the crowded tables, walking erect and bowing graciously here and there, I hung my head, unhappy and ashamed.

“Must we do more shopping?” I asked wearily while we were waiting for the car to come up. “Couldn’t we go and hear some music somewhere?”

My spirit had trailed along the earth for so many hours that I felt an urgent need of

something to lift it up; but mother negatived the suggestion. She had a "fitting" at three and an appointment to look at some Chinese rugs at four.

"I wish I could get into the woods," I said, when at last we were on our way home, "and sleep in my clothes, and have nothing to eat but what I cooked myself."

"The woods," replied mother, "would be extremely uncomfortable at this time of year, with the mosquitoes. You're much better off where you are."

"But I'm not there," I objected. "It's not living in the country to spend the day in town."

"It's what everybody does," said mother. "If you stayed on Long Island in the daytime you'd stay there alone—except on racing days, of course, and during polo week. But that's over."

"Let me stay alone sometimes," I begged.

"I shouldn't mind it a bit. I can always find plenty to do."

"No," returned mother with decision. "I'm going to take you about with me. The season is half over. People will be leaving for Newport and Bar Harbor in another three weeks. You mustn't lose a single chance of being seen."

We went to town every day that week and the next. Usually we lunched at Sherry's, sometimes at the Ritz; and once we visited an Italian restaurant in an obscure street, which "people were beginning to go to." At night we had dinners, formal and informal. At the formal I appeared, dressed in my best, stood about until all the guests had assembled, and made my escape while cocktails were being served. At the latter I remained throughout the evening. Twice I dined out with other girls and boys. The first lot were of my own age and younger—comrades in the transition

stage, whose awkwardness gave no indication of the stupendous changes, physical and mental, that were going on inside.

The dinner was a pompous affair, but the dancing that followed was good fun. The boys trod on my toes until I volunteered to teach them the steps, and then the evening was mine. How queer we should have looked to adults, had any adults been there to see! There were none, as all the adults were at entertainments of their own. Some of us had shot out like telescopes; others had their heads growing between their shoulders. Some were fat, some lean; for even your Long Island cannot escape its awkward age.

The second assemblage to which I was introduced consisted of the butterflies of next year—the grubs of last. They foreshadowed that which was to be and gave no sign whatever of what had so recently been. The girls had acquired a knowledge of what was to constitute their stock in

trade—from froufrou hair, brought down over their ears, to sharply pointed, shiny finger-nails; from coy glances to fixed smiles, displaying regular teeth or dimples or pretty lips, whichever they happened to be endowed with—extremely disconcerting to me, since I had not acquired it. Their talk was of the races, the polo that I had missed, and current “shows.”

One boy had been to the “Broadway Follies” seventeen times, as he took pains to tell me twice, being a simple soul in spite of his coat tails, hair plastered back from his forehead, and the gardenia in his buttonhole. When I went home I saw him driving himself off in a huge red automobile, with a nice-looking man in a gray ulster—probably a tutor—at his side. What could a tutor teach a boy brought up like that?

The hot, dusty days in town, the hurry of dressing, the heavy food, which I bolted

out of sheer nervousness, the strain of meeting new people—disturbed my nights and made me toss about for hours. I invariably woke with a dull feeling in my temples, and was only too glad to have my breakfast brought to me in bed. Provided the hour at which I rang for it was late enough, I could thus be reasonably sure of a good cup of coffee. I got to depend upon this more and more, and took it blacker and blacker. Exercise was not included in the plan of campaign and I felt the lack of it sharply.

One day we came out from town early, as mother was going to Mrs. Barton Winslow's for tea.

"I think I'll take you with me," she said as we turned in at the driveway.

"In this gown?" I protested, having on only my second best. "Do you think I look well enough?"

Mother smiled approval.

"You wouldn't have thought of that a week ago," she commended. "You're learning. It won't matter here. Mrs. Winslow has a gift of making every one feel at home."

This time she spoke the truth.

Mrs. Winslow was a very charming woman, graceful in appearance and in speech. I lost my heart to her on the spot.

"Come and meet my daughter," she invited; and, holding me by the hand, she led me over to the tea-table.

With a man seated on each side and two standing against the wall behind, Ruth Alvord was pouring the tea. She had a certain sort of good looks, but not a trace of her mother's breeding. How had she missed it? I wondered. It was my first encounter with the effect produced by the total detachment of interests among people of our sort.

In humbler circumstances a daughter begins to drink in her mother's ideas with

her mother's milk. We, poor things, miss even this, being generally bottle-fed; and by the time we are eighteen separation is complete, especially if some relative—a father, perhaps, as in this case—before making his exit from the stage is considerate enough to insure us independence of every good influence by providing us with a fortune in our own right.

The interruption of my advent caused Miss Alvord obvious annoyance; and, upon her mother's introduction, she gave me an impertinent stare. Mrs. Winslow had not time to observe this. Almost before the seated swains had sprung to their feet she had turned to receive other guests.

"Woo, how do you do?" the daughter drawled in a high, thin voice, artificially pitched. "Tea? No? Oh! Sit down again, Monty. You, too, Jim."

As I hastily withdrew I saw her smile at Monty in a fashion I found later to be much

in vogue among young women down here; it is done by drawing the upper lip back over the teeth.

Looking about for mother, I espied two very slim girls, with cups in their hands, standing in the embrasure of a French window. They were talking with a man whose back was toward the room. I knew that back. It was John Randall's.

As I recognized it the blood receded from my heart and then came pumping back again. Presently that overtaxed organ began pounding joyously. Who would ever have thought of coming upon John Randall in a Long Island drawing-room?

It was my lucky star that had caused this untoward phenomenon; thrust him under my eyes; willed me to find him again in the only way I should have been willing to find him—out in the open, in plain sight of anybody who was interested enough to look.

I could hardly walk properly as I has-

tened toward him; my steps wanted to break into the most idiotic little skips, just as my face had already broken into radiant smiles.

"Hello!" I cried breathlessly.

The girls looked up in surprise; he turned—and did not smile at me. He merely bowed, with a slight flush. The repulse of that look was like a blow in the face. It staggered me.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss West," he said stiffly. "I'm down here just for a few days, to start—er—a—to start a portrait of Mrs. Winslow. I made the preliminary sketch this morning."

"Oh!" I said, more stiffly than he. "How very nice! I wish you success."

With that I wheeled abruptly and walked away. Behind me I could hear the girls resume their giggling; could picture the silly things undulating up to him again, their cups shaking to the shaking of their shoulders.

Why didn't he shove them aside and come running after me to tell me it wasn't true, as I thought, that he had taken offense at my letter? That he had merely been so surprised at seeing me his mind hadn't worked? I should have accepted any excuse, no matter how lame.

But he didn't come. He didn't come because it was true. He had let that letter spoil it all. He was a sapless creature—a poor thing, without imagination enough to read mother between the lines. Why, I had never for one moment thought of his attributing that letter to me! Any fool could see that it was her letter; she jumped right out at you from the paper.

I had thought him so peculiarly endowed with fine and delicate perceptions; and now I found him literal to the last degree. It was infuriating of him to step down from the pedestal upon which I had placed him and mingle with the throng,

sharing its qualities of littleness—suspicion, egotism, false pride. Tears of vexation rose to my eyes, so that the whole room became a blur and I could not see where I was going.

Of course I promptly collided with somebody, winked away the tears in short order, looked up to ascertain who it was to whom I was murmuring an apology—and found myself face to face with Allan Denning. I expected some bantering retort; but, to my surprise, his eyes were looking straight into mine with an expression of anxious solicitude.

Curious that I had not noticed before how supremely blue they were—as blue as the shadows on snow when the sun is shining! His ruddy cheeks glowed with a suggestion of the open country; they made me forget the dense atmosphere of this tea-party and think of frosty mornings; of sleigh-bells; of crackling camp-fires. I

could imagine him walking through the autumn woods, gun in hand, or casting his flies over the still pools of trout streams. Why didn't he realize that that—not this—was his natural element?

"Something's the matter!" he said, leaning quite close.

"No!" I protested. "Nothing's the matter—nothing at all. I'm just hot, that's all—hot and bored."

He smiled irrelevantly and took out his handkerchief.

"Look!" he said, indicating the lace on my dress.

I looked; and there, amid its folds, hung a telltale tear.

"Caught!" I admitted, as he brushed it away with the irresistible tenderness of a very big thing for a very little one.

"Now come out of this!" he ordered, "and tell me all about it."

It was pleasant to obey. As I passed

mother I saw her looking at me, paused just long enough to read in that look acquiescence—commendation even—and went on. I was so tired and it was so easy to follow the line of least resistance. To be approved of by mother was a new sensation. And now to be taken care of, to be soothed—that was new too.

“Out with it!” Allan Denning commanded when we were seated on the terrace in two light-green iron chairs, with a cool vista of green lawn in front, and the movement and color of the “tea” delightfully distant, behind the long, open windows.

“That Alvord girl,” I said, “was snippy to me; and then—a friend of mine disappointed me. That’s all that happened. Honest, it is!”

“It’s enough!” he returned quickly, and his eyes flashed. “That you,” he added in a low tone, “should be subjected to the rudeness of a girl like that!”

His scorn of Miss Alvord was the subtlest flattery to myself. I sat silent, drinking it in.

"What about the friend?" he resumed presently.

I shrank back.

"Don't ask me about that," I answered, my face suffused. "I'd rather not talk about that."

"I beg your pardon," he said at once. "You spoke of it first, you know. What have you been doing with yourself all these days?"

At his making it so easy for me to keep my own counsel my gratitude went out to him afresh.

"Thousands of things!" I replied. "Horrid things! Things I hate—shopping, lunching, going to teas, dining out, having people in. When I used to read about it in the Social Notes it sounded so gay. But now that I'm living it, it doesn't seem gay a bit."

"It isn't gay," he replied. "Putting certain people in juxtaposition doesn't constitute gayety. The only people who are gay down here are the ones that go about together because they want to, not because they have anything to gain by it."

"Where are those?" I asked hopefully. "Why haven't I met them?"

"Because they're busy with each other," he affirmed. "You won't meet them, except by accident."

"I shouldn't think it would be necessary to live in big houses on Long Island to have that sort of fun," I commented.

"It isn't," he answered. "The same sort is obtainable in Lowell, Massachusetts. All you need is a gang of kindred spirits."

"Who are the kindred spirits here?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, "there are the Spencers, and the Glendennings, and the Winty Athertons, and the Boltons, and——"

"I don't see any of their entertainments mentioned in the papers," I interrupted.

"They don't give any," he enlightened me. "People give functions only when they have something to get by doing it. What's the use of being bothered if the world is your oyster to begin with?"

"It's a relief," I said thoughtfully, "to learn that there's anybody here, however narrow and selfish, who doesn't plot and scheme."

"The plotting and scheming," he returned, "is all done by those who are not in the inner circle, but who wish to appear to be in it."

"Thank you," I said, with lurking mischief in my eyes. "You've placed my family for me in Who's Who on Long Island."

"Turn over the page and you'll find my name," he replied, with an answering gleam. "I'm a plotter and schemer too. I

tap the inner circle at some points; but I'm not satisfied with that."

At that moment mother, appearing in the window, beckoned, smiled, and waved a blithe parasol.

"May I come and see you to-morrow?" asked Allan Denning as we got up, holding my hand a moment longer than was necessary.

"Do!" I cried. "Where are you staying?"

A shade of embarrassment flickered across the self-satisfaction of his demeanor.

"I'm staying here," he replied.

"Staying here?" I repeated. "And yet you spoke so contemptuously of the Alvord girl! You were not sincere in what you said to me. You like her. You wouldn't be here if you didn't."

He paused before he answered.

"I despise her," he then said deliberately. "I stay here because—because," he

ended bitterly, "that's the kind of thing we plotters and schemers do. If I'd come in contact—years ago—with a few girls like you I'd have been out of that class long ago. Won't you help me to get out of it now?"

Once more his flattery went to my head. I was confident that I could even now revolutionize his standards, having been so charmingly invited to place my finger in the pie. Returning the pressure of his fingers, I whispered eagerly:

"I'll try."

He came the next day, and the next. On the fourth day he moved over from Mrs. Winslow's house to ours, bag and baggage—motor, valet, golf-sticks, tennis-rackets, and such countless other necessities as form the equipment of the professional week-ender.

He went back to town on Monday, and

upon the Friday following, mother and father having accepted an invitation to Hyde Park for over Sunday, I was left, for the first time since my arrival, free to breathe.

I was going to spend my Saturday in sketching in oils or in picking field flowers; I hadn't decided which. My intention was to motor as far from civilization as I could, be dropped somewhere, and left until called for. The weather was discouraging to my enterprise, being densely foggy; but I set out, nevertheless.

At noon I found a heavenly turn in a road, with a high, crumbly wall made of brick; and, having sent the car away, I scaled the wall and began to sketch from the top of it a deserted farmhouse, surrounded by three trees.

A faint, yellow thing, like an orange, was coming through the fog. Every instant it grew brighter, until it began to blaze glori-

ously and became the sun. Segments of mist, transfigured, floated about, filaments of unbelievable delicacy. Finally they melted and the whole world was crystal-clear.

The colors were so much more beautiful than any I could mix that I sat, paint-brush in hand, on my perch, ears attuned to the stillness. Suddenly it was broken by a too familiar sound—the roar of a motor driven at top speed.

Closer and closer came the car, swerving perilously as it rounded the corner, its wheel in the nonchalant hold of a gray-coated young man.

Bang! A terrific report. A front tire had blown out. The machine gave a drunken lurch, jumped the road and landed in a ditch, just grazing the wall directly under me.

The young man, somewhat dazed by the jar, was amusingly unaware of my presence.

“Whew!” I said. “What a disturbance!

No harm done, I guess. What are you doing in this unpopulated place, Mr. Denning?"

Speechless with surprise, he looked up. My appearance evidently did not lessen his amazement. Left to myself, I had assembled my costume to suit my own fancy. I had on a linen hat, purchased from a caddy, and a dress of lustrous dark-blue *crêpe de Chine*, trimmed with lace. It was open at the throat—and upon the part exposed the fierce rays of the sun had burnt an angry purple V. I had exaltation in my eye, and in my hand a paint-brush. Denning vaulted from his machine.

"Why, Miss West!" he cried, face upturned. "What are you doing on top of that wall? You—ow!"

"What's the matter?" I queried.

"You're dripping paint on me," he grumbled, rubbing his eyes. "Green paint!" he amplified aggrievedly.

"I'm sorry!" I apologized absently. "I'm afraid I'll have to call a halt on this picture. I can't seem to get anywhere with it. Yet you'd think any one could make a picture of a nice old farmhouse, surrounded by three trees."

"There's not enough action in it to keep your attention," he laughed. "Now, why don't you paint me? Young man at the wheel, hair blowing, and all that sort of thing—eh, what?"

To his evident amusement he felt my downward glance at him freeze into a fixed stare. So might a wildcat stare out of a tree at the prey that it had stalked.

"I will," I said solemnly. "You shall pose for me. What luck that I've got another canvas stretched!"

I clapped my hands. I had to drop the brush, of course, to do it. He picked up my property, cleaned it with leaves, and gave it back politely by the handle.

"I've got to get back to luncheon at the Glendennings'," he demurred. "I must get to work and put on a tire. Besides, you can't paint really, can you?"

I tossed my head.

"I'll show you whether I can or not," I muttered. "You're too late now to lunch with the inner circle. You have no choice. There's some chocolate in my bag. We'll eat that later. As for the car, I'll help you get it out."

I gave a pull at my skirt with my free hand, preparatory to jumping down.

"This is an afternoon dress," I explained. "I wore it to Mrs. Winslow's tea that day. But I thought, as mother was away, I might as well use it to paint in. Bloomers would be better," I ended, giving the skirt a kick. "Oh, it would be delicious to wear bloomers! Here goes!" I jumped.

Down in the ditch, knees braced, foreheads throbbing, our four arms shoved with

all their ferocious strength. The ditch was not deep and at the sixth attempt the car consented to move.

"Whew!" I exclaimed when it was squarely on the road again, looking for a handkerchief, not finding it, and using a corner of my skirt to mop my face. "Now get in and let me have a look at you."

Head on one side, I made a careful scrutiny.

"Don't sit up so straight," I ordered. "Slump as though you had no back-bone. There, that's better. You can't have back-bone and ease both. How heavenly that your coat is gray! It brings out the wonderful blue of your eyes. Gray car, too! Gray figure, gray machine—one a part of the other. Of course, I can only give your general effect on this small canvas if I want to get the car in. But it's an effect that's worth giving."

I spoke dreamily, with caressing inflec-

tions. From his quizzical expression I knew I had been saying foolish, extravagant things. When the painting impulse was on me I never could curb my speech. It was a very intoxication.

"Push your hair farther back from your forehead," I commanded. "I want to get all the strength of it; all the dignity."

"White," I continued my soliloquy, for that was what it was. So far as he personally was concerned, he might just as well not have been there at all. "With blue veinings," I went on. "What a pity I've got to leave those delicate veinings out and just catch an impression of you with a dab of paint."

"Am I slumped enough?" he asked, to divert me; but I was not to be diverted.

"Never mind that just now," I admonished. "I'm not thinking of anything at this moment but your head. I want to get the outline—that broken line of your

hair. It's radiant, with the sun on it, all tossed up into little gold-brown waves. Some curly hair's effeminate, but yours is too crisp for that; too decided. It's heavenly hair to paint."

Five hours later I was laying on the finishing strokes. The sun was low in the west, yet my model had not relinquished his pose. There had been intervals, of course, intervals of stalk-chewing and chocolate-munching; but these had been, on the whole, of brief duration.

"It's finished!" I cried suddenly. "Don't look yet."

"Now may I?" he asked after an interval.

"No," I prohibited sharply. "Yes—no—wait! Oh, I'm afraid to have you look!"

He looked, of course.

"By George!" he said quickly. "You can paint! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I don't tell anybody," I said. "I care—so awfully. You don't honestly think it's a good sketch?"

My bravado had deserted me and I hung on his scrutiny.

"It's corking!" he cried. "Just look at the action in it! Why, that's a regular fellow; and he's on the move too! You must get some painter to give you an opinion on this. How about that Randall chap?"

"Oh, no," I protested hastily. "Not Mr. Randall. I wouldn't have him see it for the world! I don't think I have talent. I only do it to express something that's bottled up inside. Aren't you going to put on your tire?"

"Yes," he said. "And then may I take you home?"

"I'd love that!" I cried gratefully. "Our second chauffeur is coming for me in the car; he's on his way now. We'll have to

wait until he gets here; then we'll send him back. Meantime I'll help you with the tire; I've put them on lots of times. It's the least I can do after spoiling your whole afternoon."

"You haven't spoiled it," he answered in a significant tone.

While we were working over the tire, backs bent like the backs of friendly cats, he tried again to stir me to the personal note. But I was far too excited over my achievement.

When the car had arrived, and we were preceding it into the sunset, he said, eyes front:

"I mustn't forget to express my gratitude for the um-m—extremely complimentary things you've been saying to me this afternoon."

"I haven't!" I contradicted in indignation, adding anxiously: "What things?"

"About my veined, strong forehead," he

replied tersely; "my wonderful, blue eyes; my crisp——"

My laughter stopped him.

"I always rattle on like that when I'm painting," I explained. "I've done it since I was a small child. It's idiotic, isn't it? But it doesn't mean anything at all. It's a sort of hypnotic state I get into. When I come to I don't even remember what I've said."

"The question is," he demanded, "who gets the sketch?"

"May I keep it?" I asked.

"If you want it," he said as we turned in at our gate.

"Will you come in?" I asked.

"Not to-day," he answered. "But, if you'll let me, I'll come to-morrow."

He came on Sunday, and on Monday he sent a token—rather, a token multiplied by twelve. The roses arrived in a striped box of tremendous proportions; but, even

so, it had been necessary to cut away one end to allow the powerful, thorny stalks to protrude. Seen through glazed paper, the bright color was tempered to an exquisite delicacy of hue. Pillowed upon this loveliness lay a small white envelope, neatly addressed. No one had ever sent me flowers before.

I drew away the paper and peered into the box fearfully, as though gazing at an infant that slept. Then I read the card and arranged the roses in a vase. I had not thought I was interested in him. How we had frivolled—only yesterday! But now I was in another mood. For long moments I remained hovering over the table where the bold beauties stood, drinking in fragrance with nostrils, lips, and eyes.

Suddenly I was in a mysterious garden, dew-besparkled, laden with myriad sweet odors, filled with vivid flowers on swaying stalks, the opalescent wings of insects—and

the seductive song of birds. In the midst of this garden I walked with one other. I panted with the bliss of it. I was swaying with the stalks.

Something hard pricked my palm. In a trice the garden had vanished. I lifted my hand and found that I had been crushing in it the envelope which held the card. There were some red marks on the flesh.

"I believe I'm falling in love!" I said, with a weak little laugh. "How convenient! I'm falling in love with some one inside the walls!"

III

THE roses faded—and for several weeks I saw their sender no more. I had my sketch; but even that was only an impression of him upon whom my thoughts dwelt. Emotion feeds upon an absence of details—especially that vague form of it which agitates a young girl's breast. It was not love that was at the bottom of the emotion, but the emotion that was at the bottom of what, with beating heart, I thought I recognized as love. Whatever it was, it had taken hold of me and soothed my turbulence. I became surprisingly acquiescent in everything that mother demanded of me, and found myself the gainer by this docility. I went wherever I was told to go and endeavored to behave according to instructions.

By the time we were ready to exchange Long Island for Newport I had a large though sketchy acquaintance among those who were to share in our migration. It comprised nearly everybody except the Spencers, the Glendennings, the Winty Athertons, the Boltons, and a few others of their ilk, who remained consistently withdrawn. I did see the Bolton girl one day getting some polo practice in a field. She handled her mallet with the utmost skill, swinging it with long, sweeping, pendulum strokes of a brown arm, bare to the elbow. Her hair was all blown, her cheeks scarlet; she sat her scampering pony like a jockey. She looked like a real girl, and I wanted most awfully to meet her. I found out upon inquiry that she was fifteen; and that she never went out in the evening, but had her supper with her two little brothers at half past six.

There was no lack of girls of that age

who did go out to our subdébütante festivities. The Hill twins, for example, wouldn't be sixteen until September. They were the two shoulder shakers who had been talking with John Randall at Mrs. Winslow's tea. Their mother had been deposed from office several months before upon grounds that had not failed to reach even our juvenile ears. Rumor had it that negotiations were pending for a successor; but meantime there was nobody to look after the twins, who floated about as they pleased.

Nobody looked after any of us, really. So long as we frequented only certain houses we were considered safe. We should have bored older people and they had no intention of being bored; so they would give us the run of the house for the evening, and take themselves off to more congenial companionship. After dinner there was always something to divert us from any attempt at acquiring the art of conversation; if

not dancing, then an oily-trick man, or a mind-reader, or a singer of not very nice topical songs.

We moved to Newport toward the middle of July. Our house here was not so large as the Westbury house, but it was rather more ponderous. It seemed too heavy for the contracted grounds upon which it stood. There was no space for a garden, so our flowers were forwarded to us from Long Island several times a week by express.

Whenever I thrust my nose out of doors I was in full view of the strollers along the shore walk. Everything we did here was done under the public eye. The resort outdid the suburb in gregariousness. Neither mother nor her associates ever seemed to feel the need of being alone.

Anybody to whom money is no consideration can own three houses, but nobody on earth can have three homes. Having no home, of course we had no home-life. We

lived in other people's houses, and they in ours. None of us had any household gods, since such commodities do not come in triplicate.

The luxury in the midst of which I now found myself seemed to me harmful chiefly because of its falsification of values. The house, for example, instead of being a means to an end, became an end in itself.

Existence was complicated by the needless elaboration of what intrinsically was simple enough. It was not that we overdressed—any girl who appeared in lace and muslin on golf-links or tennis-courts would have been well laughed at; correct sport attire for the young consisted of the plainest of white shirt-waists and skirts, but when it came to crispness and starchiness you might go to any lengths uncriticised.

Mother insisted that I should change oftener than the most fastidious standard of personal cleanliness could possibly have

demanded. Every time I turned round there stood Yvonne holding out a fresh white skirt for me to put on. Serviceableness, for which such garments were designed, thus gave place to style, a term having meaning in one small stratum of society, but without signification to the rest of the world.

I should think it would have enraged the laundresses, of whom there were three in our laundry, to be obliged to go through the whole process of "doing up" a dress when all it needed was a little pressing to take out the creases. The idea was, I suppose, that, since they were paid to work, it made no difference what work they did.

Of our three abiding-places Newport was the least familiar to me, for the nine weeks of my family's sojourn here I had for years spent in a girls' camp in Maine. It was a far cry from that to this. The transition had taken my breath away. I was given

no pause to regain it. No allowance was made for any bewilderment on my part. A routine was mapped out for me and I was expected to follow it without ado. I got up late; for, once started on the day, it was one long, dizzying whirl. Its only quiet moments were those relegated to the changing of clothes. I now had too much exercise in conjunction with everything else. Sleepy from tennis and bathing, I had to sit up and make conversation in hot, crowded rooms at lunch; black coffee stimulated me to more exercise in the afternoon; tea restored my verve after that; then came dinner, with renewed chatter, food, and coffee; and then, to finish off the evening, dancing! More exhausted than any factory girl, I tumbled into bed.

I began almost at once to form a variety of acquaintances among the opposite sex. Some blew in on yachts for a night; others came as visitors and stayed indefinitely.

Few were under twenty, for the boys of our age liked girls older or younger than we were, when they liked them at all. Our swains ranged in age from eighty to twenty. There were retired rear-admirals who still danced, preferably with girls in their teens. There were men married, unmarried, and remarried; there were paupers, "pet cats," and sudden millionaires; there was everybody who was anybody, and anybody who had become somebody by the magic of money, through foreign alliance, by hook or by crook. We had steel kings and tobacco kings, soup kings and copper kings; the only monarch who hadn't broken in yet was the movie king, and from latest advices we were informed that he was on the way, and was due to arrive in another five years or so.

Between the girls who were not "out" and those who were there was drawn a strict line of demarcation. We were never

invited to their entertainments, or they to ours. But when it came to men, not one was considered too old or too experienced for us to associate with on equal terms. Once they had obtained the entrée, they were asked "to everything." I wondered, when I first saw them standing about in the doorways at our very young dances, what we, who knew so little of the world, could possibly have to offer them. One night I found out.

It was at a little dance at the Hills. The party was frankly "sticky," and everybody was having a dull time of it. The ballroom was hideously decorated in blue and silver, with designs reminiscent of the calliopes in circus parades. There was no angle at which these did not hit one in the eye. Wherever one looked were quirks and quirks innumerable, Cupids with overdeveloped stomachs, and bow-knots that did not tie anything.

After one unsuccessful effort to pilot him round the room I had sat out two interminable dances with my Long Island acquaintance, the Midnight Follies boy, whose name was Cyril Chub, and had come perilously near yawning right in his pink and placid face. Never to my dying day should I forget that soulless eye, that plastered hair, and that perennial gardenia. From this extremity I was rescued by an oldish man, whom I had met on another occasion, and invited to seek coolness somewhere outside. I was flattered at his having remembered me and gratefully accepted, though I knew nothing of him but his name, which was Watson. We went out on the veranda, but that was too damp, he thought; so we adjourned to the conservatory, a green and bowery spot most grateful to me after the glare of the lights inside.

I expressed my satisfaction and drew his attention to the beauty of a great palm,

with drooping fronds. We got to talking about flowers and I told him how I loved them. Then he began comparing girls to flowers; and I thought that sounded rather silly, but put it down to an older point of view. When I was fifty or sixty, no doubt I, too, should be sentimentalizing over the freshness and innocence of that youth which I was so matter-of-fact about just now. Still, it was tiresome of him to continue harping on this subject, with lowered voice and bated breath.

I had no idea there was anything personal about it, however, until his flowery language suddenly ceased and I distinctly felt something touch my bare arm. I could not believe that my senses had not played me false; and, drawing every muscle taut, I waited, absolutely still. Then I heard in an insinuating whisper:

“Don’t be frightened, Little One. I’m not going to hurt you. I’m only helping

you to wake up! You've got to begin sometime, you know!"

In one bound I was out of that wicker chair. Luckily there was light enough to see the open door. If there hadn't been I believe I should have crashed right through the glass.

In all my life nothing had ever so outraged and surprised me as this episode. As a result, I suddenly hated and distrusted all men—Allan Denning not excepted. John Randall alone escaped. I did not think of him at all. The bubble of my youthful self-sufficiency had burst. There was no gas left in my balloon. I wanted somebody to take care of and comfort me.

Mrs. Barton Winslow sat among the patronesses, *soignée*, exquisite, the woman of fashion from the tip of her small, white-crowned head to the toe of her slipper, but more, far more than that when you looked at her eyes—dark eyes, mirroring life—

human eyes! . . . Oh, if I could have confided in her. . . . Instead, I went up to her, extended the tips of my fingers, murmured something about being tired, and left.

A thin line of light underneath mother's door showed me that she was within. Sadly I passed it; for mother had failed me. She had sent me forth unprepared and unwarned.

In my own room I sobbed for hours, flung athwart my bed. At last I slept, very heavily. In the morning I woke, stiff and weary, last night's melting succeeded by an exaggerated and deplorable cynicism. Since there was no one to take care of me, it behooved me in future to take care of myself. This I thenceforth did—a little too well. I thought I saw a devil lurking in ambush behind every masculine face; for there is no disillusion comparable in poignancy and passion to the disillusion of extreme youth.

The hours, with their overlapping engagements, hurried confusedly along, and I hurried with them. In Allan's absence I continued to include him in my sweeping distrust of men. I did not know when he was coming, or whether he were ever coming. Meantime I rushed from one activity to another. If anybody asked me to play golf or tennis, I played; wherever I was bidden to lunch, tea, or dinner, I went. Mother arranged my engagements, Yvonne dressed me for them, and the chauffeur conveyed me to the designated spot. The more keyed up I got from overdoing, the more I overdid. Society had harnessed me to its chariot, a poor little three-year-old colt, without full strength of wind or limb.

Then, one day, Allan turned up. No sooner had I laid my hand in his and looked into his eyes, than I found myself, by sheer force of reaction, more than ever under the spell. "All men are liars," I had thought.

Now I said: "All men are liars—except one."

During this period John Randall did not exist for me. Ever since I had turned my back on him, and run straight into the arms of Allan Denning, the bolder image of the latter had usurped his place upon my mental retina. The young painter had been the unattainable moon; Allan Denning was the coin, which, held close to my eye, served to blot that moon out of my field of vision.

One night, however, the coin was struck aside and the moon shone once more in the midnight sky. It was at a vaudeville performance at one of the houses. Allan was sitting beside me. He did not honor many of our subdébutante dinners with his adult presence, but he often dropped in afterward to applaud good-naturedly whatever entertainment was on for the latter portion of the evening.

On this occasion it was acrobats. Upon an improvised platform a delicately muscular fellow, in tights, was awaiting, lithe and watchful as a panther, the moment for his leap onto the shoulders of a colleague. There was something in the set of his lips, the concentration of his eye, that vividly suggested the young painter and curiously clutched at my heart. The leap was made; more than the usual polite applause followed—even this assemblage had not escaped a thrill.

He who had evoked it deserved no less; spurred on by merciful necessity to sweat and strive, he had evaded softness, a quality warranted to make of whatever it touched that had once been young and glorious a thing all gone to rot—decadent and mean. From the boy's thin, streaming face my eyes turned to Allan. He was clapping, heavy-handed; complacently calling out: "Bravo!" With a shock I wondered whether

it were possible that he would one day be fat!

I dreamed feverishly of John Randall, clad in cheap pink tights.

As luck would have it, the very next day Mrs. Winslow invited me to lunch, to see her portrait, which had been all this time getting framed, and had just arrived from Long Island.

I was taken to the drawing-room to wait. With my foot on the threshold, I was arrested by the direct gaze of a pair of gentle, yet burning eyes. The portrait hung over the mantel, directly opposite the door. The canvas was not very large. It showed Mrs. Winslow sitting at ease upon a sofa with plenty of give to it, and took in the knees. She was in a simple tea-gown that fell in loose folds about her; her delicate neck, the poise of her exquisite head, with its piled-up white hair—ah, with what appreciation had they been reproduced!

With high courage, Randall had dared to put in every line he saw in that face of a woman approaching sixty; not one had been omitted. The result was that he had portrayed the dignity, the nobility, that only years can give; and proved that truth is beauty—beauty, truth.

So compelling, so intense, was the quiet of that seated figure, that it made all the little things with which my brain had been so busy fall away at once, leaving my spirit reverent and hushed. So absorbed was I in my contemplation that I did not hear Mrs. Winslow come in. I started when I felt her hand on my shoulder, and turned, with a smile. But I could not speak for a minute, because—just as they did when I was listening to music—my eyes had filled with tears.

“There’s not much doubt as to what you think of it,” said my hostess, adding quietly: “I learned to know John Randall

well during the sittings, and to value him highly as a friend."

Upon this opening might have ensued confidences that would have changed the whole course of this narrative, but for the fact that at this inopportune moment Ruth Alvord came dawdling in.

The following afternoon Mrs. Winslow exhibited the portrait by means of a tea. From four o'clock on her house was jammed. The portrait took Newport by storm. For the rest of the season, at least, the young artist's name would be on every tongue. Why wasn't he present? a hundred voices demanded. I made spurious criticisms of him to myself. He ought to have come, I argued, even if only out of curiosity. It must be an affectation—this seeming indifference as to whether thumbs turned up or down. Nobody could really be so cool as that.

Deep down inside I knew well enough that the reason John Randall refused to em-

brace his big opportunity was on account of nothing more important than myself. He wished still to avoid me. Out of pique or out of embarrassment—what matter, since he had not come?

Memory stands a poor chance in competition with the actual presence of a delightful, assiduous and constant companion, such as Denning. We were "Allan" and "Barbara" now; we swam together every morning, played golf every afternoon. A girl does want some man after having been with spinsters all her life, and here was a very charming one who was ever within call. Yet, even in his company, I was subject to moods of taciturnity and abstraction.

"You look so unsatisfied sometimes!" he commented one day, leaning on his club, throat bare, sun glinting on his hair. "I believe you still worry like the devil about being made to come out."

"I do—often," I admitted gravely.

For a while he regarded me in silence.

"If you became a highbrow," he then said whimsically, "what I want to know is: Where should I come in?"

My heart thumped agreeably.

"I didn't know you wanted to come in!" I stammered.

His smile went out.

"You bet I do!" he said in his deep, vibrant voice. "Why, I've told you a dozen times I'd never met any one like you! We don't grow 'em round here. And now you talk about deserting us! Don't you think that's rather hard?"

My eye sought the horizon at the end of the wide sweep of green. He must have noticed its wistfulness, for he said consolingly:

"*I* understand exactly how you feel. But, unfortunately, I'm not your mother! The plain fact is, you're up against it.

You don't know women with social ambitions as well as I do. You might talk yourself blue in the face—she wouldn't give in. She knows what she wants, and she wants what she wants, when she wants it! There's the whole thing in a nutshell. Why not succumb with a good grace? No rows—smooth sailing—lots of laughs on the side—somebody to laugh with—me! Is that such a ghastly prospect? Don't take it so seriously! Why, you're almost as serious as she is! Come on! Be a sport! Play the game!”

At seventeen you don't refuse to be a sport, any more than you refuse to take a dare. And the accusation of seriousness is a serious accusation, carrying with it the opprobrious implication of lack of a sense of humor. Besides, an exceedingly attractive young man, who intimates that he is in love with you, is an influential factor in any situation.

"Oh, very well!" I said gayly, though my spirit was troubled. "I don't care. I'll see it through."

The first of these statements was a lie. I did care, terribly. The second was a pledge. The importance that I was to attach to that pledge was evidence that I was incurably serious after all. In Allan Denning mother had gained a powerful ally.

Two days later Mrs. Winslow was one of the guests at a luncheon of women at our house. I was "down"; and as soon as opportunity offered she whispered in my ear:

"He's coming after all. I persuaded him. He's sailing himself up from New York in his own boat. He ought to be here to-day."

I paled and all my pulses thumped.

Mrs. Winslow introduced John Randall to Newport at an evening reception. I was there by her special request.

He shrank at sight of me; but I went straight up to him, where he stood under the portrait, and held out my hand.

"I can't tell you," I said slowly, with look upturned to it, "how picayune, how idiotic, in the light of this, I seem to myself for having resented your resentment with me—about the letter——"

A warm glow suffused his face.

"It was only because I couldn't bear to think of it that I was so cross," he said, boyishly eager. "Of their beginning the—metamorphosis stuff, you know. But now I see I was wrong. They haven't touched you! You're the very same girl I met that night."

I started away from him, wide-eyed.

"I don't think I am," I said uneasily. "You only get that impression because I'm still able to recognize inspiration in a picture when I see it."

He smiled.

"Any one would be a fool," he averred, "not to draw inspiration from such a subject."

Somebody came up to him just then, after which Mrs. Winslow brought others, and presently he was surrounded—obliterated from my view—closed in. For the next two hours he was at the mercy of the throng. They would hardly permit him to breathe.

When the crowd had begun to thin out he found me again.

"Thank the Lord that's over!" he said, with a heartfelt sigh.

I laughed.

"How brown you are!" I commented. "I never knew a painter could be so brown. What fun it must have been, sailing up! I'd love so to sail."

"Come sailing with me to-morrow!" he flashed.

I shook my head, wondering what to tell

him. He should never know of the friction that had occurred between myself and mother on his account. I was glad now that he had not divined her attitude toward him. With these thoughts in mind I was completely taken aback by his next words.

"Your mother's been awfully kind to-night," he said appreciatively. "Said how much she liked the portrait; asked me to dine week after next, and to tea on Tuesday."

This change of front on mother's part took my breath away. It hadn't mattered that I had vouched for this man out of the depths of my being, with everything in me that intuitively recognized what he was; she had forbidden our association just the same. What had altered her decision? Mrs. Winslow. Whom Mrs. Winslow accepted, it was meet that Mrs. West should accept. There was nothing for it but to get in line with the other sheep. Of my

thoughts I showed nothing, but said eagerly:

"I hope you're coming!"

"Of course I am!" was his prompt reply. "Meantime, what about that sail? Come on! I'll get you back in a couple of hours. I swear I will!"

I beamed. There was nothing now to stand in the way of my accepting.

"It'll be wonderful!" I cried.

We looked at each other, radiant. Then suddenly the sun went out. I had remembered an engagement. How came it that it had slipped my mind?

"I forgot," I said. "I can't. I've got to play golf at half past three."

"Too bad!" Randall replied. "Oh, well; never mind."

His disappointment was evident, from his eyes all the way down to the sensitive tip of his chin. I found myself unaccountably contrasting that chin with Denning's.

That the latter had allowed his to forfeit something of its natural contours outraged my artistic sense. Adonis he was, beyond question; but Adonis "to date," a little blunted as to edges—a few pounds overweight.

"Have you been doing any painting?" he asked, with an effort, after a pause. "You have! I can read guilt in your eyes. Confess!"

I blushed furiously. If he should discover that my golf partner and the subject of my sketch were one and the same, it would spoil our fresh start.

"Only one sketch," I deprecated. "Nothing at all. I finished it in a day."

Glancing toward the door at this juncture I saw two or three late arrivals who had just come on from somewhere else. Allan was one of them. He joined us at once, turned to Randall, offered congratulations and shook hands. How charmingly cordial

was his manner! No reminiscence in it of that cool stare with which he had looked him over at their first meeting. Was this change due to the recognition of genius, or could it be that he, too, was one of the sheep? Instantly dismissing this suspicion, I yet wished he had been endowed with foresight rather than hindsight. He ought to have recognized at a glance the quality of that face. . . . I had!

"I only dropped in for a minute," Allan said. "Good night, Barbara. Don't forget our match to-morrow, will you? Thirty-three. And do show Mr. Randall that sketch you did of me. She did a cracking sketch of me, Mr. Randall. Get her to show it to you. Make her!"

He was off, and Randall and I were left uncomfortably together. I knew what that line in his forehead meant, that almost imperceptible quiver of the chin. He was drawing deductions at the rate of a million a minute.

"Please," I besought him, in acute distress, "stop thinking—what you are thinking! I might just as well have sketched anybody. He happened along just when I wanted to sketch. When I want to sketch I sketch anything that comes along. I——"

From these verbal involutions I was rescued by mother, who, approaching, wished Mr. Randall good night with the utmost cordiality, and said it was time to take me home.

When I laid my hand in his, something in his expression reminded me of the way Miss Wier had looked when she had come upon me in my dinky little hat.

Tuesday came without my having caught sight of him again. That afternoon my game was unspeakable, I was so afraid of not getting through before five. Luckily Allan was due somewhere else at tea-time; so we only played nine holes. In his absence I

was sure of an opportunity for a frank talk with Randall that would clear things up.

Arrived at home, I waited confidently; and he didn't come. After everybody had been sitting round for hours, the door-bell rang. I heard soft sounds, as of things being laid down on a table.

"It is he, after all!" I thought, exuberant.

It wasn't he. It was Allan!

One moment of blank disappointment; and then a lightning chemical transformation of all the ingredients of that disappointment—the chief, hurt pride—into overwhelming gratitude toward a friend who never failed.

"I thought you weren't coming to-day," I whispered. "I thought you were going to have tea with the Glynn Rollinses."

Before answering, he bent so close that in one moment I seemed to feel the pressure of his lips upon mine.

"I've had tea with the Glynn Rollinses,"

he said, implying that the Glynn Rollinses were powerless to hold him long away from me. "And now I'm going to have more tea," he added comfortably, "with you."

He chatted for a while with mother, who handed it to him, and with the other guests; and then we went and sat on a remote sofa. He was not only in high spirits but he was most awfully good-looking in golf clothes. Some day I would sketch him like that—one leg thrown over the other; hair all crisped and kinked with fog; teacup in hand. I would sketch him forty ways and show all the sketches to John Randall, just to see him wince—for so reckless was my mood that I delighted in the thought of hurting.

He began gossiping about people; I responded. It was a form of diversion I despised; but my ideas were all out of kilter this afternoon—and it required so little effort. He laughed at some rumor I

retailed. I followed it up with another choice bit; he laughed again, and the more he laughed, the hotter my cheeks flamed—the more excitedly and incoherently I talked.

“Do you know,” he commented, suddenly slapping his knee, “I’ve never known you to let yourself go like this before! By George! You’re waking up!”

At this expression, I stared at him. Could it be true? “I’m only helping you to wake up,” had hissed the serpent. “You’ve got to begin some time, you know!” Ah, how soon I had begun!

That night a formidable dinner occurred at our house, and I entered the drawing-room amid a loud hubbub of indignant talk issuing from a medley of dowagers, diamonds and fans, all in motion. No strikers gathered on a street-corner could have given more unmistakable evidence of indignant agitation. The men who were

there did not say anything; they let the women talk.

A single name was on everybody's tongue—the name of the new lion. It appeared that this lion, instead of submitting to being decorated with garlands by soft hands, had shown his teeth. In plain English, devoid of metaphor, John Randall had actually dared, without a word of explanation to anybody, to give Newport the slip. Taking advantage of the lasting qualities of the breeze, which my weather-eye had foretold, he had unfastened his moorings at Mrs. Winslow's dock that very afternoon and sailed away into the sunset in his little catboat.

Enter cocktails—exit girl. That was my programme. That night I thought the cocktails would never come! Snatches of talk reached my ears.

“No—he never promised to begin carrying out his orders here; but, of course,

everybody assumed he would. No manners! . . . Doesn't know how things are done. . . . Hasn't any breeding. . . . The orders will stand, but this thing will kill him socially, of course!"

At the risk of mother's displeasure, I made my escape while yet no cocktails were in sight. I had no defense of Randall to make. He had been frightfully rude to me. He must have heard further rumors regarding my relations with Allan. But he had cared rather magnificently—enough to get himself in bad with the high muck-amucks who could have made him. I could not be very angry with him. He was free to get out. I, alas! was bound—by my promise, by my pledge—to "see the thing through."

The walls closed in on me that night, shutting the vistas out. How silly I had been to imagine that I could have my cake and eat it too; play both ends against the

middle! Life was not like that. You had to stand for one thing or another. Out on the links that day, looking into Allan's eyes, I had renounced my rebellion—decided to accept present conditions. That, not this, was my true moment of choice. From that moment on I threw my hands up and drifted with the tide. The die was cast.

In the mornings the sea was so blue and it was such fun to have a merman to swim with, and in the afternoons the golf-course was so green, and it was so stimulating to have a partner to play with, that I swept all the disturbing thoughts into the back of my mind, where they lay in a disordered heap, inviting dust. There was no doubt that having two grown-up men show interest in me had gone to my head a little. None of the other girls of seventeen had anybody so old to bother about.

My instrument was keyed too high. By

September I started at every sound. If a door slammed it seemed to slam in the top of my head; the slightest stimulus was sufficient to set in motion the vibrations of my emotional reactions. One night I caught a look in Allan's eyes—those eyes so supremely blue, so heavily fringed; and his hand pressed mine. He whispered the three fateful words, and our lips met. . . . Nothing else was possible; for I was in love with him—madly in love!

Straight from his arms I went to mother, unafraid to break in on her privacy, bold with the boldness of a messenger who brings welcome tidings, to be delivered anywhere, anyhow—even, like this, in the middle of the night.

She was in bed, with her hair strewn all about the pillow. By the shaded bedside light she looked very beautiful, yielding and young. Eager and smiling, I approached and took the hand that lay, slender and

very white, against the soft whiteness of the blanket.

"Oh, mother!" I whispered. "It's come!"

I expected she would understand at once; so I was surprised when she returned blankly:

"What do you mean? What has come?"

Embarrassed, but still confident, I let her hand fall and returned shyly:

"Can't you guess? I'm engaged!"

At that she gathered herself up in bed as an animal gathers itself for a spring, and I stepped back in terror.

"What are you talking about?" she demanded in a voice that cut like the lash of a whip.

Only one thing could account for it; she suspected that John Randall was the man. Her tone, her manner, hurt just as much as though he had been. How could any older woman make any young girl shrink and quiver away from her like that?

I wanted to gather this big thing that had happened to me to my breast and run away with it; but it was too late.

"It's not the man you think," I said painfully. "It's—Allan Denning."

To my amazement, the name did not placate her.

"Nonsense!" she retorted sharply. "I never heard of such nonsense in my life!"

I could not believe my ears.

"I thought you'd be pleased," I said. "I thought you were crazy about him! You've always thrown him in my way."

"To give you social confidence!" she cried. "To bring you to people's attention! That was what he was for! To insure you a start!"

Something turned to iron inside me at these words. I no longer shrank; I had lost all sensation of timidity.

"You expected me to work him for all he was worth—to squeeze him dry, and

then to throw him over!" I summed up. "I see!"

"You won't gain anything," she warned, "by distorting my words. I didn't say anything about working or squeezing. Those graphic expressions are your own. Allan Denning has done just exactly what he wanted to do. And in the end he's amused himself by flirting with you a little. If you make anything more of it than that," she concluded disparagingly, "it's because you know nothing whatever about life; you, a mere schoolgirl—a baby."

"I'm not so much of a baby," I replied slowly, "as you think. And I know a good deal more about life—than I did. If you imagine that you can start things going and then—then—make them stop—by just putting up your hand, like a policeman regulating traffic—why, then, it seems to me it's you who don't know about life—that's all!"

From the silence which followed I saw that my words had begun to carry conviction.

"How far," she asked at length, in great agitation, "has this actually gone?"

"I've just told you," I answered. "We're engaged. He's going to speak to father to-morrow."

Her indignation found a new channel.

"We'll see about that!" she declared ominously. "I can't believe it of him! To play upon a young girl's ignorance! To impose upon her lack of knowledge of the world!"

I smiled bitterly. I had heard such words before. First, it had been John Randall, and now it was Allan Denning who was imposing upon my inexperience.

"You wouldn't let me have the man I wanted," I cried; "and when I take the one you substitute you're not satisfied, either! You'll never be satisfied, no matter what I do!"

"Now, Barbara," she almost begged, "be reasonable! It never occurred to me that you wouldn't know that Allan Denning is no match for you. He's good-looking and well connected and convenient to have about, and all that; but he hasn't got a cent. And as for marrying him—Why, child, you haven't even begun to look round! Wait till after next winter. What sort of time do you think any girl who was engaged would have when she came out?"

"I needn't come out—now," I suggested, though I recognized the futility of the suggestion.

Mother's face turned to adamant and her eyes to steel.

"Whatever happens," she announced, "you are coming out!"

She said it as though she were registering a vow before heaven.

For mother's manner of receiving the news of my engagement I had been totally

unprepared. I had run to her with it, expecting to be praised—and had been incontinently rebuffed. I was less upset on my own account than on Allan's. How would he take her unflattering estimate of him as a parti? Hard, I was sure. In counselling me to acquiesce in her programme for the coming months, he had obviously realized no more than I, that his name was not to appear upon it. Perhaps he would not feel so convinced now of the advisability of being a sport, playing the game, seeing the thing through.

What was my astonishment, not to say chagrin, when he took my information quite easily, and was all for compromise! You had to be tactful with women like my mother, he said confidentially. They must always be made to think that they were getting their own way, whether they actually were or not. Nothing was to be gained by antagonizing them.

The following was the policy he outlined in council before the concert of Powers: Not a word concerning what had occurred between us was to be breathed until after the close of the New York season. Only we four were to know of it. If at the beginning of March next I should have changed my mind, I was to call the whole thing off. Thus mother's arrangements for the winter would not be in any way jeopardized. To all intents and for all social purposes I was free.

Mother and father expressed themselves as satisfied and took my silence for consent. As a matter of fact, I scorned trial engagement as I would have scorned trial marriage. Like every other girl of seventeen, I was firmly convinced that I knew my own mind and would never change it. My word was my word—not a mere near-promise, subject to the statute of limitations. The more they said that I was not bound, the more securely bound I felt.

I justified Allan's willingness to make concessions to mother upon the ground of his faith in me. In staking his life's happiness upon his belief in my fidelity, he was paying me the highest tribute in his power. Still, I felt that an open rupture with my parents would have been the more honorable course to pursue. Never before had there been the smallest reservation on my part in my relations with mother. I had argued with her, burst into tears, shown temper, done all sorts of exuberant and childish things; but I had never for one moment allowed her to remain in any doubt as to what I meant. I had carefully refrained from being tactful with her.

Now I was letting her infer one thing while I intended another. Curiously, it was a man who had urged upon me this Jesuitical method of dealing with her. And I had always been led to suppose that a man's sense of honor had a finer edge than a girl's!

Of course I had no business to fall under this or any influence that was at odds with that something inside which had always kept me straight. That was what I had got by drifting. I had drifted so far and so fast that I could not make up my mind to turn about and put up a fight. The alternative was just to keep on going wherever the wind and the tide chose to take me.

The weather was so mild that it was October before we returned to Long Island. Once arrived there, we spent our days in the city as before, going back to the country only to dine and to sleep. In preparation for what was to come my wardrobe was being amassed. Mother concentrated upon this task enough energy to have run a dozen Bureaus of Serbian Relief. If I was expected to attend all the types of function for which garments were being provided I thought I should be a rag before the end of the first six weeks.

She didn't buy me a variety of dresses, hats, and coats, and let it go at that. No; every costume was an equipment by itself, a symphony of nuance—a tone poem. Each afternoon gown, for example, had its accessories of hat, veil, gloves, coat, fur neck-piece and muff, shoes and stockings. Even gloves were not interchangeable. Attention to these details consumed an exorbitant amount of time—to say nothing of money. I remember we went into nine shops one day before we found enamelled hatpins of the exact shade of mauve to harmonize with a certain hat.

There seemed to be no end to what mother could do when she was doing what she wanted. The vitiated air of the shops stimulated her. If at first she didn't succeed she asked nothing better than to try, try again. Yet there were things that tired her. If she walked for half an hour along a country road she became so exhausted

that she had to lie down. When her secretary was ill one day, and she was obliged to write her own notes, she could not eat any lunch. Loud or abrupt talking was painful to her—for instance, mine. When I laughed “right out” I often saw a little frown come between her brows, as though I had given her a headache.

Many of her friends shared these idiosyncrasies. There was Mrs. Fiske Wyman, for one, a “confirmed” invalid; yet she had just risen from an almost permanent bed of pain, with an alacrity hardly decent, to go yachting in the Bahamas; while Miss Julia Endeman, who had weighed two hundred undismayed and had never exercised in her life, had recently rolled her hips away by turning over and over fifty times each morning on her bedroom floor, and “gone in” for golf.

Everybody was planning to skate this winter on the Radmore roof—even those

whom the blackest ice had not tempted in youth, the natural skating time. Wabbly legs could be strengthened by practice, weak ankles propped; and she who was unable to attain balance by herself might always hire somebody to hold her up. From the dictates of fashion no infirmity excused. Fashion made its puppets dance to any tune. During that autumn, in and out of shops, I estimated that we must have walked a hundred miles. We never left off until the wax ladies in the windows were being covered with sheets and the blinds drawn down.

We spent and were spent. What for? That I, too, might be made into a waxen manikin, set in a window for one season for exhibition purposes, and then carried away to make room for fresh goods. There was a career for you!

I was becoming surfeited with clothes. Every girl loves clothes, but she does not

love a superfluity of them. I had once eaten all the caramels I wanted, and for years thereafter had not been able to look at a caramel. As a child I had always approached the park by the Seventy-second Street entrance on my way to the Mall. Now I sedulously avoided that approach. Fifty-ninth Street was all right, or Eighty-fifth, or Ninetieth; but Seventy-second I was done with forever.

One disadvantage of owning a costume for each occasion was the anticipation it involved. It was bad enough to have to go to functions at all, without focussing one's attention upon them for hours beforehand. Oh, for my old rough serge, which had served me all day and every day at school for as many seasons as I could get wear out of it!

Sometimes I remembered, with a sense of loss, the things in my experience that had been uncomfortable. I had grumbled

as loudly as anybody else, at the time, at having to pile out of bed half asleep on a dark winter morning to close my own windows and stand shivering on a chilly floor; but now I thought that I would have welcomed any hardness to relieve the eternal softness of my life! My bed was soft; my food was soft; the people about me spoke in soft voices; there was no edge to anything, no sparkle, no snap.

My engagement had been so qualified and bereft of the natural attributes of an engagement that it afforded me but little satisfaction. Allan lunched with us occasionally at Sherry's, and that was about all I saw of him. Things would be different in the spring, but I was not so old that spring did not seem to me a long way off. And there was much to come, between now and then.

In preparation for the great event, my coming-out ball on December 20, we closed

the Long Island house much earlier than usual, and found ourselves just after Thanksgiving, as mother said, "alone" in New York; by which she did not mean, of course, that there was not the usual quota of people in the streets. I was satiated with that ball long before it occurred, for it was the only topic of conversation. I had always supposed living in the future to be a prerogative of youth; but no young person I had ever seen lived so much in the future as mother.

She took precautions against the possibility of everything not being perfect in every detail by stocking up with commodities, as though the sources of supply were presently to be forever cut off. Even an awning was ordered to be specially made, instead of being hired from a caterer for the evening. She showed me samples of awning cloth and looked reproachful because I had no preference for green and

white stripes over red and white, or vice versa. She got another French maid, to supplement Yvonne, so that the two might work in shifts like a night nurse and a day nurse in illness—one being always on hand. A second butler was likewise procured, that coat tails, instead of mere livery, might still be in evidence before guests when the butler in chief was out or sleeping. As it was assumed that, once launched upon my social career, I would keep to my bedroom until noon, yet another housemaid was added to the staff.

As a result of this forethought, the servants now outnumbered the family in a ratio of five to one. I ran into them at every turn, stumbled upon them in every corner. It was like living at a fashionable hotel on the Normandy coast while waiting for the season to open—storm-lashed waves; empty casino; band playing to the echoes. Everything ready, and nothing doing. How

could one settle down to normal accomplishment with this abnormal fever of anticipation permeating the atmosphere? If mother found me reading she would order me to close the book, for fear my eyelids should become reddened. Painting was out of the question, for painting took time, and I could never count on more than half an hour.

It wasn't an evening's pleasure that was being planned; it was the opening move in a systematic campaign. So far as I could make out, pleasure didn't enter into it. After the 1st of December mother's activities narrowed down to the desk in her sitting-room, where she and a strange woman, who came every morning, pored all day long over sheaves of papers and marked off names in the various lists with little crosses. The strange woman seemed to know exactly who should be invited and who should not. They managed it all be-

tween them, without once consulting me. I suggested only one name, with much diffidence—John Randall's—which was received without comment and written down.

Time and much cogitation had brought me to the conclusion that Randall's sudden departure from Newport had been due wholly to delicacy. If he had retired in favor of another man it was because he had believed that I cared for that other. Once convinced of this, his sole consideration had been to remove the embarrassment of his presence as speedily as possible. The fact that in failing to seize his unprecedented opportunity he was jeopardizing his future of worldly success and running the risk of losing a score of orders, was a matter of supreme indifference to him, if it occurred to him at all. Poor as dirt, he was, nevertheless, a royal spender. Honor to whom honor is due.

Unfortunately, instead of flashing me the

true explanation at once, my woman's wit, or intuition, or whatever it is that constitutes our superiority to man, had been extremely slow upon this occasion in getting to work upon the situation. It had, in fact, remained in a state of suspension during some weeks. In the interim Allan Denning had obtained my promise. I was morally bound by it now, hard and fast, hand and foot. But to Randall's behavior I had at last found the key. Therefore, the invitation.

When we had first moved to the city Allan had begun again to present himself with frequency, but, upon a hint from the authorities, had obediently fallen off in attendance, and had since reappeared with the utmost circumspection, only upon rare occasions. I sometimes wondered whether it was not a case of shutting the barn door after the horse had trotted forth. After all, we had afforded ample opportunity for

comment that summer, having been almost never apart. Not everybody's sight was as peculiar as that of mother, who went through life believing that only such things existed as she wished to see. John Randall, for example, had been "on" long before I was.

The approach of my eighteenth birthday, which filled me with a shy sense of mystery and wonder, was acclaimed by mother solely as affording a good excuse for a theatre-party. This occasion was to be a farewell to subdébutantism, consisting of girls only—thirty of them—and those, younger ones who were not coming out this year. It was quite in order, mother explained to me, to invite girls of that age without boys. The most fashionable dancing-class in the city—that which preceded the Cosmopolitan dances for girls not yet out, excluded the other sex, except for a Christmas evening dance, and an Easter *thé dansant*.

After much deliberation, ten names were selected from the list of this dancing-class. Nine out of those bidden accepted, as the girls were only fifteen and had not many engagements as yet. Alas! The very one who declined was the one mother most wanted—the little Bolton girl.

The remaining twenty were asked from the year's Cosmopolitan list. The Cosmopolitan dances, colloquially known as the Mops, were the only official peep-holes into the social arena. To be eligible a girl must be sixteen—and much besides. It was excessively easy for some girls to be invited to join and insuperably difficult for others. The dances were subscription affairs, but it was not only money that had to be subscribed. Those who failed to get on the list organized consolation dances of their own, with limited membership, and patronesses, and all the proper accessories, so that the newspaper accounts of them sounded just

as good. A few of those who attended the Mops went to these also, if they were particularly enthusiastic about dancing.

Boarding-school had deprived me of my three legitimate years of Mops. By means of them I should have gained experience. The next best thing, according to mother, was to tap them—to keep in touch with the members; so that when my sun should be setting, a year from now, I might still have points of contact with those whose luminary was drawing toward its zenith.

The party, when it occurred, came perilously near being a frost, for mother was not accustomed to young people and did not know how to put them at their ease. The little girls arrived earliest, not having yet acquired the smart habit of keeping other people waiting. From the maturity of eighteen I leaned down toward them with a reminiscent wistfulness for the childhood forfeited during those three years. They

were so sweet, several of them, and came into the room shyly, their bodies tenderly curving, some inward, some outward—like flowers blown lightly this way and that in a breeze. Their recently uprolled hair rested unfamiliarly against their heads, creating new outlines; a few of the coils seemed too heavy for the soft necks to bear. What a sin against nature to mould them—to make them conform; to point out to them what was what and who was who. Youth was receptive enough; it would not take long.

Meantime they were standing about, some with hands folded patiently across their stomachs, others with their satin slippers scrunched inward, wide-eyed, expectant, and dumb. This would never do! In desperation I managed to corral the whole group into a corner, tell them little jokes and whisper little confidences until their laughter bubbled up like geysers out of the ground.

Each newcomer heard it as she came in, and joined our elastic circle at once; it offset mother's formality, and the situation was saved. Soon there was a twittering like that of swallows under eaves. Everybody was natural, as the sexes are apt to be in the absence of each other.

Against mother's advice, I had chosen "Henry VIII" instead of the musical comedy she proposed. It was a superb production and the girls were crazy about it. Any puppy will eat meat if you throw it to him, and like it just as well as lollipops.

That was a happy evening for me—a sort of female-bachelor dinner, dedicated to pure, spontaneous gayety, before assuming the bonds of wedlock to the social world.

As the 20th drew nearer, the atmosphere grew more and more oppressive and hushed. I became, day by day, increasingly apprehensive of not carrying out my part

in the affair in the right form. The thought of it weighed on me as though it were a presentation at court, or even a ceremony of coronation. I might say or do something that wasn't on the programme—I never could tell just what I was going to do or say.

I wasn't used to pomp and doubted whether I ever could get used to it. It sat uneasily upon me, and hampered my movements in much the same manner as did my delicate clothes. Yet I wanted so earnestly to do my best that I even sent up a little prayer about it, and intended neither triviality nor irreverence thereby.

Personally I did not attach the least importance to this or any function; but mother cared terribly, and that was enough. I had sacrificed much to "play the game"; "see the thing through." I wanted the climax to occur in a burst of glory. Thus much I could do toward the success of the crowning achievement of the life of her who had

borne me, whether my ideals were hers or not.

"I wonder," she said reflectively one day when we were out in the motor together, "whether you'll be a success!"

I smiled, and uncomfortably felt her eye on the spot where I'd forgotten my dimple was.

"I'm not going to worry about that," I returned gently. "You're doing the best you can to make me one, mother. It doesn't depend on me."

"Oh, yes, it does, in large measure," she asserted. "I'm just deliberating what tactics to advise. This spring I believed your—er—outspokenness and your blunt manner would offend. Now, from what I've observed at Newport, I'm inclined to think that they take. People are tired of the usual thing, probably, and looking for something different. On the whole, I think I'll have you push your individuality."

The color surged over my face and neck in wave after wave.

"Oh, mother!" I protested. "Don't you see that you're going to kill whatever it is that's me by talking about it? Please—please don't!"

Nevertheless, I was a little relieved to think that I need not behave like an automaton at the ball.

The result of the invitation to Randall was a note from Mrs. Winslow next day asking mother to allow her to take me to the studio for some music that evening. Of course permission was not withheld. With Mrs. Winslow I should have been allowed to go anywhere!

The minute I stepped out of my own house I began to feel the breath of a keener air. Snowflakes, light as thistledown, were falling; I can feel their tiny pricklings of perforated frostiness now on my cheek. In the motor I touched the fur-edged sleeve of

Mrs. Winslow's wrap with cautious finger, to make sure that she was real. There was an illusion of fitfulness and shadow about her, and I wanted to dispel it, for my love went out to her there in the night. Daughterless mother and motherless daughter that we were, our natures had hailed each other long since, at the first hand-clasp.

That evening brought Randall out of the void for me—put a background behind him and earth under his feet.

The studio was a big room in a downtown street, up several flights of stairs. Somebody was singing when we got there. The room was full of people who made no sound. Toward the back I caught sight of Mr. Winship's face, appreciative and intent. It was my first contact, save at public concerts where tickets were to be bought, of a gathering that dared to show itself serious. No one was ashamed of being serious here!

Randall was sitting motionless, chin forward, hand on knee. He must have heard us; but he gave no sign. We were spared the variety of "manners" that would have forced intrusion upon us. In the arch of the old-fashioned doorway, her breast rising and falling under her pearls, the fold of her train coiled about her feet, Mrs. Winslow was allowed her fair share of enjoyment, standing unnoticed until the song was at an end. Then Randall sprang toward us, with a glad face of welcome, all his boyishness loosed from the spell.

"You!" he said, turning to me when he had greeted Mrs. Winslow. "In my house!"

That was all; but he said it as though some Presence had crossed his threshold, and I trembled, incapable of reply.

Hour after hour they made music for the sheer joy of it. On and on they went, without order, sequence, or brevity. During intervals Randall scrambled eggs, we ate, and

I met everybody. There was plenty of jollity; and when people laughed, they laughed! They were no more afraid of laughter than of seriousness.

The guests included painters of both sexes, musicians, sculptors, stage folk, two playwrights, several readers for magazines, editors and their wives—people who did things; and people who, like Mr. Winship and Mrs. Winslow, loved to see things done. Some were word artists, who chatted familiarly of subjects that, where I came from, were kept imprisoned between the covers of books. Everything they touched upon they clothed with form and color. They brought dead history to life. They discussed philosophy and metaphysics. It was almost too rich, that meal, after a starvation diet of such long duration.

“You’re coming to my ball?” I whispered to Randall as we said good night.

He nodded.

"Really, this time!" I enjoined.

"Yes—really!" he promised, with a flitting smile.

It was the only reference that was made by either of us to his late defalcation.

In the interval I tried not to think of him. My intelligence must be of a very limited order, I reflected ruefully, since I seemed incapable of thinking of more than one man at a time.

At Newport, Allan had crowded Randall out; now Randall was crowding Allan out. And this was not as it should be. I was a little annoyed with Allan for his tame acquiescence in the rôle of absentee landlord. He should have been keeping a closer watch on his preserves.

IV

ON the morning of December 20 I partially woke to a sensation of portent. The fear of something vaguely grandiose was sitting astride my chest, filling me with oppression. Some cataclysm was imminent. For a moment I thought it was my wedding-day—no less. I did not feel happy about it. Blinking, it was rather a relief to realize presently that it was not so bad as all that. I wasn't going to be married—yet. I was only coming out. This was the day.

I did not go out that morning. I wanted to be on hand and see what was doing. There was much in me still of the little girl whose habit it had been to rush to the front door, every time the bell rang, to discover what shape of parcel was being

delivered, or to get the letters the postman brought. First, a vanful of chairs arrived; and next, a melancholy looking motor, suggestive of the undertaker. Flattening my nose against my window, which was my nearest dignified approach now to the outside world, I sighed with relief when it began to disgorge nothing more ominous than potted plants. So many things came during the next two hours that I marvelled how any one could have remembered to order them all. Caterers' wagons were not wanting. In spite of our chef and his staff we had to buy little cakes, and what-not, just as they did for Sunday-school picnics.

The best part of the day began after lunch, for it rained flowers the whole afternoon. The boxes were opened in the sitting-room, so that the secretary could sort the cards and jot down descriptive memoranda for acknowledgments to be written by me later on; then the men brought the flowers

to the drawing-room by armfuls. Mother sat in a chair at first and gave orders as to where they were to be put, but, being summoned elsewhere, left me in possession; whereupon I changed the position of every vase, and in less than an hour had that room blooming like an exhibit in a flower-show.

I looked over the cards before dinner and found ninety-seven names of people I didn't know. The same people would undoubtedly commemorate the occasion of my marriage in the same way; and of my funeral too—if fate should prove so obliging as to give it precedence of theirs. If people said what they meant in this world I could imagine any of them, supposing I were to make inquiries and tender my thanks verbally to-night, replying, with a bow: “Nothing personal intended, I assure you. Merely a matter of form.”

John Randall sent me no flowers. Allan Denning did; but I was in too much of a

rush at the moment to pay much heed to them. They and the hair-dresser arrived simultaneously; so I thrust them into the last remaining receptacle and let it go at that.

That hair-dresser was an anatomist of no mean order. I did not recognize my own skull when he had done with it. Where it was too small it had been given the illusion of expansion, and where it was too big it had seemingly contracted. I undulated up from my neck and I tapered down from my crown; ringlets twined where wisps had been before; coils looked solid that were hollow inside; I stuck out where I ought to stick out, and where I oughtn't I didn't. The backward and upward poise of the structure lent inches to my height. She was almost tall—that girl who returned my stare into the mirror; and correct, surprisingly—far too correct to be me!

“It’s faking!” I protested, and picked up

a tiny strand of strictly débutante pearls, which had been given me for my birthday.

I let them trickle through my fingers, gleaming like dewdrops in moonlight, and then put them on. Bah! Utterly out of place, the delicate things, against a throat strong, muscular, and brown! Raising discontented eyes, I beheld Yvonne, the temptress, with extended powder-puff. I shook my head and snapped the clasp to. Saving my coiffure, as to which I had been allowed no say, I was determined to stand on my own merits; to be displayed—like an article put up for auction—“as is.” After all, the pearls were as well suited to me as the rest of my surroundings.

In white, with an aura of tulle, I made my way to mother's room and offered myself for inspection. While it lasted my heart was in my mouth. When at length she said solemnly, “I've never seen you look so

well!" it fell back into place. She was not ashamed of me, then. That would make the ordeal far easier. That it was to be an ordeal I had no manner of doubt. The situation was one I could not possibly dominate as I had dominated the theatre-party of girls. It was too big for me.

Toward eleven o'clock we took our stand at the drawing-room door. Shortly after, the oldest and most important personages—always the earliest—began to arrive. They came by twos and threes at first, then by tens and dozens. Their glances were critical; their hand-clasps cold. Within half an hour they had reduced me spiritually to pulp. My spine had become a string; my pretty white dress seemed a rag; and my whole personality a hopeless proposition. It was not that they were intentionally cruel. Safe within the shells of self-importance they had provided themselves with to walk about in, they felt no shafts from with-

out, and supposed others equally invulnerable.

Would younger people never begin to come? I wondered. What had these dowagers to do with dancing? Whose entertainment was this, anyway—mother's or mine? It was fully ten minutes since any gloved fingers had touched my own; so I felt free to leave my post beside mother, near the door, and look into the ballroom. There the orchestra's spirited playing still invited in vain. Brocaded trains swept the polished floor; diamonds glittered; feather fans swung deliberately to and fro. What men there were were personages, too, though many of them did not look it, the years having given them fantastic curves never intended by Nature and unknown to art. Fashion, in regard to concealment of such deficiencies, certainly discriminates in favor of women. A man in a white waistcoat, so far as his outline is concerned, might as

well be on the slab at a Turkish bath. From distasteful contemplation of one particularly offensive bulge, I was recalled by a light step behind; and, turning, I caught my breath at sight of John Randall, likewise in a white waistcoat, with a glorious inward curve. The look of merry anticipation in his face was new to me; the eyes that could be so serious were actually snapping to ragtime!

"Try this!" he suggested succinctly, and we took up the rhythm in the middle of a beat.

"I didn't know you danced," I murmured. "How delicious!"

Perhaps I was prejudiced in his favor, but he seemed to me to dance divinely. Closing my eyes, I gave myself up to the joy of it. I did not know whether any other couple was on the floor. Suddenly I felt my partner's muscles tighten, his pace falter. Somebody was about to cut in.

I opened my eyes upon Allan, smiling with an air of ownership, hands outstretched. He was within his rights, his act strictly in accord with the dancer's code. With entire propriety he might thus have claimed any girl he knew. I could not do otherwise than suffer him to swing me away. Allan Denning—jealous! Furious though I was at the interruption, I was flattered too.

"You might have let me finish it out," I grumbled, "instead of snatching away my cake in the middle of a bite."

"Had to obey orders," he laughed, slowing down as we neared the door. "You shouldn't have bolted just then, you know. No end of people coming in. Young people. Your mother sent me to bring you back."

Then it wasn't jealousy. How flat! He hadn't come of his own accord. He'd been sent. There was nothing to be furious about. I was furious that there wasn't. He was a half-hearted lover, this lover of

mine. The momentary tang had gone out of the evening, to return no more.

I had always supposed society to be exclusive; but the last few months had taught me otherwise. Mother had followed, upon this occasion, the generally recognized custom, which prevails among metropolitan hostesses, of inviting to their houses not only the young men they know personally but also those they know about. The social secretary had furnished the names, and the majority of those who answered to them had materialized during the evening, been presented, and done what was expected of them—namely, taken me for a turn. Some had overlooked the implied obligation, and were merely making a convenience of the house as offering certain advantages over a public dance-hall. For one thing, the champagne was free.

I looked about everywhere for Randall, though I knew I was looking in vain. He

had gone. What else was there for him to do when I was snatched away? He did not know any of the other girls. He had only come because I had asked him. This festivity was none of his—nor of mine, for that matter. But it had served its purpose. In half a dance we had found each other as dancing partners. Half a bar would have sufficed. Those who had danced together once could dance together again—and again—and again. We had danced to-night in a ballroom; but a studio would do as well. And, given two pairs of eager feet, a fiddle was as good as a stringed orchestra—every bit.

Once, while I was waltzing with Allan, I forgot Randall altogether; and then suddenly I felt something sharp and hard against my breast. Could it be a button? A waistcoat button? Released upon cessation of the music, I examined his outline with apprehensive eyes. N-o; no actual

bulge—as yet. And oh, how handsome he was! Not so half-hearted, either, after a few digressions to the corridor, where the footmen were kept busy filling glass after glass. But I was in no mood for love-making that required artificial stimulus to give it a fillip. I refused his invitation to supper in favor of that of a black-browed count, with a limited vocabulary and a tiny waxed mustache.

At length people grew tired of eating. Napkins were thrown aside; chairs pushed away; the elderly had had enough—they were ready to say good night. According to precedent, the dancers returned to the ballroom for more dancing; then the music stopped, as music must; and everybody went home.

Mother disappeared to give some orders, and I was left in the great glittering drawing-room, serving now no purpose, since it was meant for entertaining and there was

no one left to entertain. The flowers were all drooping on their stems; and as for me, the toes of my slippers were soiled and crumpled, my tulle had wilted, my hair was coming down.

It was over! No need to stand here any longer. The deed was done. I was "out"!

When I passed into the hall the men were waiting there, motionless, to extinguish the lights. Slipping by them, I ran up-stairs.

There was no doubt of it; by coming out I had acquired merit with mother. From the evening of my *début* my status was changed. After the manner of a son who has attained his majority, I was now a person of importance in the house. I received more attention than I demanded, and was accorded a larger measure of consideration than I either desired or deserved. Luckily I had a good memory for the lean years behind, and thus preserved some

measure of equilibrium. They were such a little way behind—those years!—just round the turning in the road. My feet had travelled that uphill road alone.

Lately mother had seen fit to resume what, to her, was motherhood; it was like a garment long discarded and left to hang in a remote corner of the closet until such time as occasion should demand that it be brought forth, shaken and aired. The result of such resumption had not displeased her. It lent a new attribute to her personality; added an element of surprise. It supplemented her and admitted of fresh combinations. It was a better fit than she had had reason to expect.

A *débutante* must be heart-free. Therefore, my engagement was in abeyance; it had degenerated into a thing of naught. All summer I had been allowed to be constantly in Allan Denning's company; now I never saw him alone. I submitted because

I had offered to submit, but I chafed exceedingly, and thought only of getting over the tiresome months between now and the moment of my release.

Meantime, at least, time was not hanging on my hands. During the remainder of the month of December the coming-out teas and dances were as thick as weddings in June, and I attended them all. On the whole, the teas were preferable to the balls. I was invariably crushed and breathless, it was true,—on one occasion mother and I were wedged on a stairway and could not move up or down for three-quarters of an hour—I saw nobody I wanted to see and everybody I didn't—but, though I was as acutely uncomfortable as one of a crowd of trippers jamming an excursion boat, I had as personal a feeling as they of adding to the jollity of the occasion—helping things along.

One tea is pretty much like another. It

does not admit of apprehension and excitement for months and even years beforehand. It can be weathered without undue mental strain, with no graver consequences than a good-sized bill at the florist's and a few sandwiches left over at the end of the day.

By the 20th of the month everybody had come out who was coming. Then occurred the interlude of the holidays, after which the actual season broke. You supped at one ball and you breakfasted at another; if you did not keep going you were not having a good time. I would bolt my eggs and coffee at four in the morning with the others, and then, before I got into the motor with my maid, stand for an instant in the street, eyes on the glowing east, despising myself, my rumpled frock, my soiled slippers, so tawdry in the portentous hush of the new day.

Once, to make my peace with it, having

arrived at home, I wished Yvonne good night, dumped my finery in the middle of the floor, and, dressed in an old school Tam, a rough skirt and a sweater, went out again alone. I encountered an old Irishman—a night-watchman, I judged—with iron-gray hair and majestic presence, who looked at me without surprise and inclined his head gravely, as to a fellow worker in the world. Nothing for weeks had so stirred me as this assumption. My heart blessed him as I passed, and my eyes gave the countersign.

There was no sleep for me that night—or, rather, that morning. I had recovered the insight with which I had come back from boarding-school, and which I had somehow lost since. My relation to the life I was leading was crystal-clear to me. I was and always should be a rank outsider. I felt no scorn for mother's point of view; but it was not and never could be mine. Sooner or later I must be free of these surround-

ings. It was no more possible for me to adapt myself to them than for a fish to adapt itself to the breathing of air.

Things had worked themselves out according to my expectation, with one exception. I had warned myself not to fall in love within the walls. Poor little fool that I had been for my pains! Treasure is treasure, in one place or another; and it was well within the enclosure that I had stumbled upon mine. Well, there was nothing for it but to gather it up and stagger forth with it upon the highway.

In plain words, I was going to get out; but I was going to carry Allan Denning along with me—when the time had come. I had learned enough to know that it would be hard to uproot him; that it would be myself who would have to take the initiative. Well, I was equal to the task. Out of dead air into air that was in motion I would sweep him; he would draw great

drafts of it into his lungs, and after that he would never want to go back. Together we would tackle the road that wound uphill all the way—yes; to the very end!

I thrilled at the thought of it; I felt his hand in mine; all the trivialities that had kept us apart melted into nothing; tears started to my eyes; my lips breathed his name. I must see him this very day—and not over the teacups, either; I was done with pretense, so far as he was concerned. He was mine and I was his; and if we were to play the farce out for the benefit of the public we must be fortified between scenes by a little concentrated living and loving to keep our courage up.

I was just going to sit down and write him an urgent summons when my tooth began to ache. I had two rows of exceedingly serviceable teeth and had never had a toothache in my life; but this one started as though it meant business. It exacted

the strictest attention; I laid my pen down and sat, taut and dismayed, hand on cheek. Impossible to idle in a negligee, boudoir cap, and slippers, with a red-hot iron in my mouth!

I dressed hastily and rang for a maid to accompany me to Doctor Read's, to seek alleviation; for, though in my real character I might walk abroad safely at sunrise, in my assumed one it was not permissible to go unaccompanied in mid-morning. No one responded. Neither maid was listening, for it was not in the regulations that I should bestir myself before noon. Unable to bear another moment's delay, I therefore defied custom and outraged convention in seeking my destination unprotected by means of public conveyances, taking a transfer, along with other strap-hangers, and finishing 'cross-town, directly in front of the dentist's door.

Not having made an appointment, I was

obliged to wait. Another patient was "in the chair." After the custom of teeth when relief is imminent, mine had ceased to throb so insistently. A little apart from the stale magazines littering the table lay a fresh, new copy of *Gossip*. I picked it up out of curiosity, because I knew it was without the pale. At the very first paragraph my heart turned to ice. I forced myself to read it through—not once, but three times:

I have it on good authority that our genial friend, Allan Denning, having had pretty poor sport in salmon fishing, last summer took to fishing for minnows at Newport and—by Jove!—landed one right in his hand. In the vernacular, every millionairess this side of the Mississippi having turned him down, last spring on Long Island he unearthed little Miss Innocence, who responded to his rather shop-worn charms on the sly. He followed up his advantage at Newport, and every day there was a twosome on the links. It was a pretty romance, until my young lady's parents got onto it. Then there was the devil to pay! If the girl was to be sacrificed let her be sacrificed to some purpose, they

shrieked. There might be money enough to catch a duke if sufficient splurge was made about it. Keep Allan for a pet round the house! That was all he was good for, and everybody knew it.

Poor Allan! He'd fixed the girl, but the old folks were too many for him. When he found that out he crawled. He adhered to his custom of letting himself be walked over and kicked. For the twentieth time he went 'way back and sat down. He's sitting down now, waiting for the fireworks to go out. Then, if the duke doesn't materialize, up he'll step again. It's a long chance he's taking, but it's my guess that it's his last one of anchoring himself to a fortune. The girl's spunky enough, I'm told. She's utterly inexperienced and he's got her cold. If he doesn't do anything rash he thinks he can count on her to work things round. We shall see!

At the end of the third reading the letters danced before me. I swayed to a chair and dropped upon it; the paper, clutched in my fingers, sank to my knee slowly, as though it had been a thing of weight.

The dentist came in suavely, bowing some woman out. He made sympathetic inquiry as to my trouble, for I was the daughter

of a lucrative patient who had all her fillings done in gold. Seeing the paper in my hand, he murmured a hasty apology for having it about; some one had brought it in and left it, he explained; he had had every intention of destroying it; it was a scurrilous sheet.

"Scurrilous! Scurrilous! Scurrilous!" ground out the horrid buzz-saw, to the jangling of my nerves.

"I don't think it'll bother you any more now," soothed Doctor Read, applying a small square of cheese-cloth to my mouth as I lay extended, weak, limp and white. He referred to the tooth.

He watched me narrowly as I went out.

"May I take it?" I asked stonily.

"Take what?"

"That paper."

"Certainly; by all means, Miss West."

There was a colored maid in the dressing-

room when I put on my hat. She handed me my hatpins and said something about the weather in a low, musical voice. I longed to pour my sorrows into that girl's ears. I was so bewildered that I did not know what to do. I had never thought it was in dentists' offices that idols were shattered and whole structures of the imagination came crashing to the ground.

A man was in front of me at the ticket-office window when I reached the subway. As he took the change that was shoved toward him I noticed what an extraordinary hand he had; so white, so slim, so nervous—a distinguished hand! He swept up the pile, turned away; and in the act of shoving in my nickel I glanced up. To the disgust of the official in the window, I failed to take the ticket he offered, but, instead, touched the man before me on the arm.

“Mr. Randall!” I said hoarsely.

Startled exceedingly, he turned. It had been no greeting that I had uttered. He had recognized in it a cry for help.

Out of cavernous darkness the express came rushing, with its gleaming headlights; but we let it go and made our way back to daylight and the street.

"I've got to talk to some one," I appealed. "I've got to have some advice. Look at this."

I showed him the paragraph. As he read it he grew red and white by turns. At last he turned and looked at me, and in that voice of his, which was capable of as many gradations of expression as his face, he said simply:

"I can't advise you—in this matter. It—wouldn't be giving—the other fellow—a square deal."

And this was the man mother had said was not a gentleman—this the man at whom that "other fellow" had looked askance

because he didn't remember having seen him "anywhere" before!

"Isn't there anybody else?" he resumed, with an effort. "How about Mrs. Winslow? Couldn't you go to her?"

I seized upon the suggestion and clung to it.

"I'm not coming with you," he said. "I might—I'd better not come."

I descended alone into the cavern, boarded one of the rushing trains, and in short order reached Mrs. Winslow's house. My heart sank when I saw her motor standing in front of it. It must be luncheon-time. She was lunching out. There she was now, on the step! I would snatch a hurried word with her—make an appointment. Her eyes lighted when they fell on me.

"Well, Barbara!" she said, saw my agitation, and stopped.

Before I could speak she laid her hand on my arm. I could feel the magnetic current

of those fingers through her glove and my sleeve.

"Come in," she said quietly, and turned back to the house.

"Oh, no!" I cried in dismay, being by this time well versed in the paramount importance of engagements and hours to the class of society in which Mrs. Winslow moved.

Nothing short of a death in the family would have kept mother from a bridge-party; or, in fact, any appointment made weeks ahead and written down on her pad.

For answer Mrs. Winslow drew her arm through mine, while the footman pressed the bell, and the door swung open.

"You'll be late," I protested. "Or you'll miss it altogether."

"What does that matter?" she returned; and I could detect a faint trace of scorn in the beautiful curve of her lips. "Eldredge

shall send a telephone message for me. Come up-stairs."

No sooner had the door closed upon us two than all the lines of her proud figure seemed to melt. She turned toward me eagerly, and there was such a look in her dark eyes as I had seen in the eyes of Italian women nursing their babies on the curb. I threw myself into her arms headlong and crumpled up upon her breast.

Not until she had kissed and comforted me, called me "darling"—not sentimentally, but naturally—and quieted me in her arms, did she sit down on the sofa, indicate a big chair for me to draw up near her, and ask me what my trouble was. I unfolded the paper, which I still held, and handed it to her open at the paragraph that referred to Allan Denning. She read it, laid the sheet down on her knee, and remained silent.

Confirmed in my apprehensions by the

fact that she withheld comment, I broke into an impromptu defense of the subject of the attack. I pleaded his cause from the beginning in a tumult of broken words and disordered phrases. I talked until I was out of breath, and all the time I realized that I convinced neither her nor myself. I broke off in the middle of a sentence; my lips quivered. I knew I was beaten, and I felt bruised.

As I searched her face for fresh courage I was startled by her resemblance to the portrait. The same compelling look, that gripped and lifted you! Oh, the insight that had pinioned that look on canvas! . . . I felt that we were no longer two in that room, but three. . . . Neither his own will-power, nor yet doors nor windows, could keep John Randall out!

"I've always felt sure," Mrs. Winslow said, "that something would save you from the catastrophe of marriage with Allan Den-

ning. It's happened to come from outside; but it might just as well have come from within. You're such a straight thinker—about the straightest I've ever met. You would have ended by realizing that there was no ground upon which you and he could stand together. The things you hold essential he can never grasp the meaning of. You can't expect him to, any more than you can expect him to decipher words written in an unknown tongue."

"Then," I faltered, "the opinion—of the person—who wrote that paragraph—is the same as yours?"

"Essentially it is," she answered. "He's very charming to meet and very good-looking, but you can't get away from the fact that he's a poor thing! If he had great virtues you could forgive him for having great faults. He has neither. Why, Barbara! It would take a hundred of him to make one of you! His nature has an alto-

gether different consistency from yours. It's thin!"

"But is he really a fortune-hunter?" I asked wistfully. "Is he so despicable as that?"

"Quite," she affirmed. "When he was staying with us at Westbury in June he was very attentive to my daughter Ruth. However"—sighing—"Ruth knows how to take care of herself."

My cheeks blazed.

"He said he despised her!" I cried.

"Perhaps he did," she returned, "but he proposed marriage to her none the less."

Words half forgotten came back to me: "I stay here because—because that's the kind of thing we plotters and schemers do. If I'd come in contact—years ago—with a few girls like you I'd have been out of that class long ago. Won't you—help me—to get out of it now?"

Was it after this that he had proposed to

the Alvord girl, and been rejected? He had not moved over to us for four days! Had he even then been laying the foundation for plotting and scheming in a fresh channel in case of his failure in this? Was that why he had come to see me in the intervals of his pursuit?

"What shall I do?" I cried. "How shall I tell him?"

"In the fewest possible words," she advised. "Avoid anything in the nature of a scene. You could leave it to your mother, of course."

"That would be cowardly," I replied. "After all, it's my business."

"You're no shirker!" she commented.

When I left her the only thing I had omitted to confide to her was the incident of my meeting with John Randall. Throughout our talk his name had not been mentioned.

Mother was annoyed with me and her

indictment held two counts: the first, that I had gone out without a maid; the second, that I had remained away for hours without notifying her. She had three "days" to take me to, and my remiss behavior was the topic of our conversation all the afternoon.

It did not occur to her to inquire into the cause of my prolonged absence. Poor mother lived in a confusing world, where phenomena happened arbitrarily, without rhyme or reason—when they happened at all. When her mental sun set it dropped with a thud below the horizon, unhampered by any natural laws. Therefore, she never got below the outer layer of things.

I went to a dance that evening, as usual; and no sooner had I entered the ballroom than I was aware of Allan Denning—the whole five feet eleven of him—leaning against a foolish, frivolous wall of white and gold. Blue of eye, bronze of head,

square of shoulders, imposing of height and bulk—all these advantages I conceded him; only so complete had been my disillusionment that I didn't care a snap of my finger any more. They meant exactly nothing to me now.

How lately I had thought him out of his element in a ballroom! I remembered curiously that the blue of his eyes had seemed to me like the shadows on snow when the sun was shining. I had associated him with out-of-doors. I now saw that I had complicated matters which were, in fact, essentially simple. If Allan had belonged out-of-doors he would have been there! This was his true element—this his natural setting; here he lived and moved and had his being—amid the artificiality, the champagne, the powder, and the pearls.

I might as well tell him right then and there, and get it over. The circumstances were conducive to the avoidance of any

sort of scene. He saw me and approached at once.

"I haven't got the hang of this new step yet," he said easily; "but shall we make a stab at it?"

To his amazement I answered, so low that no one else could hear:

"Allan, something has happened—to convince me—that you don't really care for me. It was—a thing I saw—in *Gossip*. I wanted to tell you—right out—as soon as possible. I only saw it this morning. This is my very first chance."

He paused, thunderstruck, and then muttered, incredulous:

"You don't mean to say you place any reliance on that—vile slander!"

"It's been substantiated," I returned quietly, and looked him steadily in the eyes—those eyes that, so far as I was concerned, might just as well have been stones. They dropped before mine.

With an effort he pulled himself together and bent his handsome head.

"Barbara!" he began. "Little girl! Don't let any one tell you I'm not crazy about you! Come with me somewhere—anywhere—where I can explain."

"What's the use, Allan?" I returned sadly. "It wouldn't do a bit of good. I've made up my mind."

"Not"—he gasped—"not to throw me over?"

"Just that!" was my grave reply. "After talking with Mrs. Barton Winslow."

He blanched to the roots of his hair. Then he noticed a group of men near the door observing us rather narrowly.

"We can't discuss this here," he whispered hurriedly. "If you won't come outside, dance with me, will you? Only once round! People are looking. They can see that something's up."

I stared, trying to understand him.

Either he knew me so little as not to take me seriously, or else he was proposing to let slip a crucial opportunity, on the ground that "people were looking"! Oh, how trivial, how incorrigibly trivial he was! How right Mrs. Winslow had been!

"Just one turn!" he urged, more and more uncomfortable.

"Certainly," I said, and let him swing me away.

We had not progressed ten feet before Johnny Hargrave cut in. Thus, Allan, no doubt to his intense relief, was most opportunely released from an embarrassing situation.

I received two impassioned notes from him during the course of the next morning, begging me to see him at the house; and, these having elicited no reply, he followed them in the afternoon with a third, in which he actually suggested a clandestine interview in the park. Which was going pretty far—for Allan.

That evening I went to mother's room to tell her that I had determined to give him up. She had finished dressing, and was walking to and fro before her cheval glass, scrutinizing over her shoulder the details of her costume, while Yvonne stood silently by. When I whispered that I wanted to speak with her alone she sent the latter away; and I announced my decision. Her gratification knew no bounds. Never had I seen her so elated.

"You'll get twice as much out of your social opportunities now!" she exulted.

Then she seemed to forget that I was there, and started walking up and down again, but not before the mirror this time. All at once she stopped and hung poised on an arched foot. Her clasped hands, with their rosy nails, supported her delicate chin; below them her breast rose and fell in an accession of pleasurable excitement; triumph was on her lips, and in her eyes were dreams—of dukes.

Poor mother! My heart went out to her, and I longed to protect her—from life. Since our ideals were irreconcilable, it was inevitable that I should disappoint her at every turn—again, and again, and again. Between us lay the intangible forces of the Imponderables, holding us forever apart.

As I passed her on my way out I touched an end of the filmy tulle she had wound about her throat, with lingering fingers full of compunction, tenderness, and regret.

I stayed at home that night for the first time in many weeks, and seated myself in the up-stairs sitting-room beside the fire, with a book. But in my unsettled mood the tale I had chosen ran its course too deliberately; and as for the fire, it soon became unbearably hot. I moved away; but the walls of the room seemed closing in on me, giving me a sensation of suffocation. The artificial system of heating worked too well; though the month was February,

so carefully had drafts been excluded that one could hardly draw breath. I went to the window and gave it an energetic shove. It flew upward, letting in a vigorous blast that stung my temples deliciously.

Fifth Avenue was still pulsating; buses rumbled, motors hummed; pedestrians went by, walking briskly, their necks muffled in their collars. This was no night for lingering.

Only one man—that slim one there—did not seem to be in any hurry. I watched him until he was out of my field of vision. A moment more and he was within range again, retracing his steps. Directly in front of the house he paused, looking up, and in the glare of the arc-light I saw John Randall's face—off guard. What I read in it caused me to dash out of the room headlong and run down the stairs two steps at a time. He had not moved when the heavy grilled door yielded, under protest, to my hand.

“Come in!” I said peremptorily. He

made no motion to obey. "I was going to write you," I said slowly. "It's over—the thing we were talking about."

He came in then; and when I had closed the door behind him he said:

"How awfully hard for you!"

"Not any more!" I answered quickly. "It wasn't—the real thing. I think I felt that subconsciously all the time."

In the sitting-room, since the window had remained open in the interval, the air was thoroughly changed.

"Why," I demanded abruptly, "couldn't you have rung the door-bell and asked for me? If I hadn't opened the window just then I should never have known you were there! Oh, John Randall, why will you always stay outside?"

His eyes pricked mine.

"Because I'm an outsider," he retorted; "and I never trespass on private grounds. I only skirt them occasionally."

"I'm an outsider too," I said gravely. "I always suspected it, and now I know it. I don't belong here any more than you do. Some day or other I'm going to discover where it is that I do belong!"

He took a deep breath and his eyes glowed.

"I wanted to hear you say it," he avowed. "I just wanted to hear you say it! They've put you in a mould—and you've come out retaining your own shape. It staggers belief! I couldn't have done it. No one could—but you."

"Do you remember," I asked quietly, "the imitation lobster, that night we met? The wolf in sheep's clothing?"

"Yes," he nodded. "And I remember just what your comment was. 'That's what they're trying to do with me,' you said."

"Do you remember your answer?"

"How can I remember what I said?"

"Well, then, I do. You said: 'Don't let them.' And, if I haven't, you're more than half responsible."

As I spoke I could see his reserve—that provoking reserve which had so long deflected our lives out of their true course—breaking up, like ice before spring freshets.

"You'd have done it, anyway," he averred. "You've got a nature that would pull out of anything! And there's no ruthlessness in it, either; that's the beauty of it. How you were able to curb it, to hold it down as you did, to defer in every way to your father and mother, to give their system a fair show, instead of taking the bit in your teeth, is a marvel to me! And I'm not the only one, either. You ought to hear what Mrs. Winslow thinks about it! You ought to know what she thinks of you, anyway. She thinks you're the straightest, the cleanest-minded, the safest and the most

earnest girl she's ever seen. Besides that, she thinks——"

"Oh, pooh!" I cut him short. "Mrs. Winslow never said that!"

"Some of it she did," he affirmed, the eyes that had been all steady light suddenly atwinkle. "Anyway, I didn't say she said it—I said she thought it!"

We threw back our heads and laughed.

"Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" I challenged teasingly.

But he stopped laughing and trembled from head to foot.

"It's the money!" he blurted out, with a boy's abruptness. "That's what it is, if you want to know."

"But the money's an accident!" I cried, wondering. "An incident! Why do you make it so important? We needn't use the money I'll have, for ourselves. We can use it for foundations of some sort—or hospitals. We'll see," I ended contentedly,

“what we’ll use it for. And meantime we’ll be living on yours. You’ll have enough to keep me in smocks—if I paint too. Haven’t you just made a stupendous success? Haven’t you got orders it’ll take you two years to fill?”

With one cry he sprang toward me and crushed me in his arms.

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